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THE LOWYAT INCIDENT

THE POTENTIAL DANGERS
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FIRST LOOK

ASUS ZENPAD Z370CG
ALIENWARE 17
SAMSUNG GALAXY A8

TESTED

SONY C4 DUAL
CANON EOS 7D MK II
APPLE WATCH

GAMETIME

FINAL FANTASY X & X2
EVERYONE'S GONE
TO THE RAPTURE
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REVIEWS

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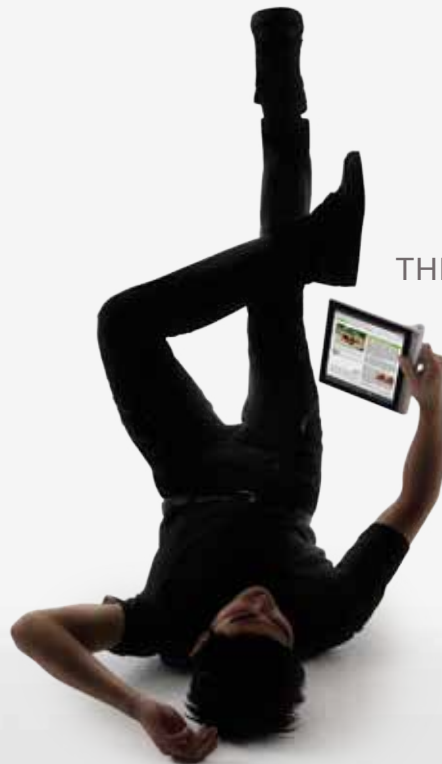
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CONTENTS



14 WIRE

- 16 A New GeForce Experience
- 18 Take A Shot
- 20 Catch Your K-pop Stars on Mobile
- 22 Running to the Fore
- 26 Alcatel Returns
- 28 Malware Scandal
- 30 Gear Up
- 32 Stay Puff
- 34 Concert Postponed
- 36 Built Tough
- 38 Dominated by 10



40 BIZ2.0



45 GIZMOS



54 FIRST LOOK

- 54 Asus Zenpad Z370CG
- 55 Alienware 17
- 56 Samsung Galaxy A8

57 TESTED

- 58 ASUS Z170
- 60 ASUS Designo series MX27AQ
- 62 Sony Xperia C4 Dual
- 64 Canon EOS 7D Mark II
- 66 Samsung Galaxy Tab S2
- 68 Acer XR341CK



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CONTENTS



68 TESTED (CONT.)

- 70 Xiaomi Mi Note
- 72 LG Curved OLED TV
- 74 Sapphire R9 390X Tri-X
- 76 Apple Watch
- 78 Razer Blackwidow Chroma

79 SHOWDOWN



Intelligent Timepieces

89 COVER STORY



The Lowyat Incident



95 TECH101

- 95 Windows 10 101



105 GAMETIME

- 106 Gamescon Rundown
- 112 Hyperdevotion Noire
- 114 Final Fantasy X / X2 Remaster
- 116 Everybody's Gone To The Rapture
- 118 Fate Grand/Order
- 120 Minecraft
- 121 Fallout Shelter



122 SPOTLIGHT

- 122 Post Hibernation

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Filling In

Hi all, I'm Matthew Yap and I'll be taking over at the helm of PC.com in the interim. While I'm leading, I hope to continue to bring interesting content to you readers on the latest in PC components, gadgets, and our team favourite: video games.

August had some cool news in store for us, with new PC components just only announced very recently, such as the new NVIDIA GTX950 cards. But overall, it was a pretty dry month, with there being less in PC components and a dearth of interesting games to review. That said, we do have some interesting items in our Tested and GameTime this month, so do make sure to check those out.

With the social media storms taking place after the Lowyat incident awhile back, we also discuss the realities of how the form of media is used. Do check out that feature by my colleague in our Cover story. We've also compiled a piece on the smartwatches that we've reviewed so far this year, and picked what we thought was the best of the lot.

For those who are into the visual arts pop culture scene, you'll want to take a look at our reports on the two ACG (Animation, Comics & Games) conventions in August: Visual Arts Expo and Animangaki.

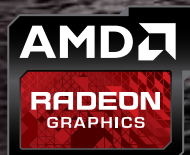
There's more to read up on, so I'll leave you to browse through at your leisure. Enjoy our September 2015 issue.

Cheers!

Matthew Yap | **Acting PC.com Editor**

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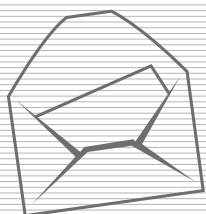


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Vinodhani Nair K All text files are in 11/08/2015 15:32 26KB	>	LETTER OF THE MONTH 	From Jake Hi Team PC, my laptop just lost all sound and I'm trying to find out if I can fix it without sending it in to the service centre. Do you have any idea what could be wrong? I'm on Windows 8.1.
Connor Tan More bounties for the month! 11/08/2015 15:32 56KB	>		
Matthew Yap Bring it! 11/08/2015 15:35 5KB	>		
Nisya Aziz Eyes on me 11/08/2015 15:36 12KB	>		
Jake Sound Problems 10/08/2015 15:38 20KB	>		Reply
Rul MK Bring what? 11/08/2015 15:40 14KB	>		To Jake From PC.com Hey Jake, it could be caused by faulty or corrupted drivers. If you've already tried restarting your PC and it didn't work, then try reinstalling drivers. Go to the Start screen/menu and type out "device manager", then click on the first result that appears. In the Device Manager, look for "Sound, video and game controllers" and double-click on it to expand the options. If you see a yellow question mark, then that means there's something wrong with the audio drivers. Take note of the driver maker, delete the current faulty entry, then head over to their website to download the new drivers. Lastly, restart your PC and reinstall the drivers, which should hopefully solve the issue.
Nain Mazlan It's Nain.. not Nine! 11/08/2015 18:01 5KB	>		However, if drivers are fine then it's likely a hardware related issue, in which case you'll have to send it in for repairs.
Nizam See you again~ 11/08/2015 12:15 17KB	>		
Sia Zhen Ning or whom? 12/08/2015 09:30 5KB	>		

My graphics card has been showing signs of overheating, help!

Adil

Well, Adil, if it's just plain overheating then it's possible to fix it with a little bit of maintenance. If you're up for DIY-ing, you can remove the GPU from the motherboard to clean it up yourself. Look for a YouTube tutorial on how to remove the heatsink and clean it, then change the thermal compound. Once you're done with that, you can reinstall the heatsink then plug the card back in.

My laptop uses a very small SSD and it's running really low on space after I upgraded to Windows 10. I've try to clear my recycle bin but it's not enough! Can you tell me what else I can safely remove to regain some space?

Han

Hi Han, the reason why there's less space after upgrading is because the Windows 10 files don't override your previous OS, so your entire Windows 7/8/8.1 folder is still sitting in your C: drive looking pretty. We've actually prepared some tips for Windows 10 in our Tech101 section this issue, one of it should be exactly what you need: how to remove your previous Windows OS folder. Do check that out!

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- 16 -

A NEW GEFORCE
EXPERIENCE

- 18 -

LENOVO LAUNCHES
VIBE SHOT

- 19 -

NIKON ANNOUNCES
NEW NIKKOR LENSES

- 26 -

ALCATEL
RETURNS

- 30 -

SAMSUNG TEASES
GEAR S2

- 36 -

PANASONIC'S LATEST
TOUGHBOOK AND TOUGHPAD

32

GOOGLE ANNOUNCES
ANDROID MARSHMELLOW



Wire

Hooking you up to the latest.

18



26



30



36



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A new GeForce and GF Experience

NVIDIA launches GTX950 for MOBA

by matthew yap

Gamers come in all kinds and not everyone needs an expensive GTX980 Ti to get the best graphics. Some just want something to play low requirement games, something like Nvidia's new GTX950. Just under the GTX960, the new GPU is baby brother of the Maxwell family.

NVIDIA has made the GTX950 to be faster than the fastest gaming console and designed it for MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena) gamers. Built on the Maxwell GM206 architecture, the GTX950 comes with 768 CUDA cores, a base clockspeed of 1,024 MHz with a boost to 1,188 MHz, memory clockspeed of 6.6 Gbps, a 128-bit bus, and runs on 2GB of VRAM.

Along with the launch of the new GPU, NVIDIA declared that there will be a new update to the company's GeForce Experience (GFE) software. This update will have two major new features to it, one is the one-click optimisation button for MOBAs such as Dota 2, League of Legends and Heroes of the Storm called the "Low Latency Settings", as well as a set of new beta features.

The Low Latency Settings is basically a one flick button that's currently only available for the GTX950 GPU until further notice. It uses the settings already available for NVIDIA GPUs to provide MOBA gamers with reduced latency in their games, allowing them to enjoy greater responsiveness. Additionally, it locks the refresh rate of a MOBA (100 Hz for Dota 2 and League of Legends) and enables V-Sync, so that when paired with a compatible monitor, there won't be any of the tearing normally seen with V-Sync enabled. Those who are into MOBA gaming and need a new upgrade will surely find the GTX950 a compelling upgrade.

As for the live-streaming functions, the key feature is NVIDIA's new Gamestream

Co-op. Still in beta, this feature lets users stream their game over the internet to a single friend. On top of that, it lets the friend to join the game for co-op gaming together. With this new feature, you can now share the experience of your favourite game, get a friend to help you tackle a hard mission in a game for you, or just play private stream

for your play session. Gamestream Co-op makes it possible to do all this, even if your friend is halfway across the world.

To find out more about the new GTX950 and GFE beta features, visit <http://www.geforce.com/whats-new/articles/introducing-the-geforce-gtx-950>. 



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Take a Shot

Lenovo launches VIBE Shot

Lenovo recently launched the photo taking-centric smartphone – the Lenovo VIBE Shot. This new smartphone not only has a 16-megapixel rear camera, it also comes with a 5-inch Full HD display for excellent visuals.


At the launch, Foo Mun Yee, Country Lead for Lenovo Smartphone in Malaysia, announced, “The VIBE Shot is a stylish yet powerful smartphone that is perfect for people who want both a phone and a camera. This latest product underlines our sustained commitment and effort to innovation, by giving people what they need, in a compelling design.”

Just like a proper camera, the VIBE Shot has a dedicated shutter button, used not just for taking shots but also to quickly launch the camera app. The camera has a fast infrared auto-focus (AF) system built-in, as well as the world’s first tri-colour LED flash.

Under the hood of the VIBE Shot is Qualcomm Snapdragon 615 octa-core processor and 3GB of RAM to run all

your apps. While for storage, you get 32GB of built-in storage and microSD card support for up to 128GB on top of that. The smartphone is also LTE compatible, so users with 4G data plans

can enjoy faster Internet speeds on the VIBE Shot.

The Lenovo VIBE Shot is now available for RM1,399 in Carmine Red and Graphite Grey colours. 



AOC Partners with Twentieth Century Fox

AOC monitors to be featured in “The Martian”

For those who don’t know, AOC has partnered with Twentieth Century Fox for the upcoming movie “The Martian”, the highly-anticipated sci-fi adventure from master director Ridley Scott. With this, AOC has become the official monitor in this movie. To celebrate the movie’s imminent release, AOC has unveiled the brand new gaming monitor, the 24-inch AOC G2460PF.


Gamers are a demanding lot, some more than others. They play games where speed is essentially and every blur is a distraction. This is why they need monitors like the AOC G2460PF, which has a refresh rate of 144Hz and also 1ms Screen Response time for smoother movement visuals.

The monitor also has AMD FreeSync, a technology that syncs the monitors to the GPU for less visual tearing.

People who need optimal view will be glad of the monitor’s 4-way adjustment stand. It has height adjustment up to a maximum height of 130mm, as well as swivelling, tilting, and even pivoting to get a portrait mode. In addition, the monitor also comes with extras like a USB 3.0 compatible SuperSpeed USB hub, HDMI 1.4, DisplayPort, DVI and MHL ports.

Besides the high refresh rate to reduce the motion blur effect, this monitor also features the AOC Flicker Free technology to protect users eyes and reduce eye fatigue by using Direct Current (DC)

dimming, where the backlight is always on to eliminate flicker.

The AOC G2460PF will be available beginning of October 2015 for a retail price of RM1,299. 



Nikon Introduces New NIKKOR Lenses

Made for photography enthusiasts

Nikon Malaysia recently announced the availability of two new lenses for Nikon users, the AF-S NIKKOR 200-500MM F/5.6E ED VR and AF-S NIKKOR 24MM F/1.8G ED. Both lenses are the latest in NIKKOR's range of FX-format lenses designed especially for capturing inspiring shots. With the super-telephoto AF-S NIKKOR 200-500MM F/5.6E ED VR, you can get great outdoor or nature shots from afar. While those who are into landscapes or looking to snap that amazing bokeh shot will delight in the AF-S NIKKOR 24MM F/1.8G ED, a fast wide-angle prime lens.

Hiroaki Ono, General Manager of International Marketing Division Imaging Group at Nikon Singapore Pte Ltd, said "Nikon seeks to enrich the photography

experience by introducing lenses that enable photographers to breathe life into their creations. With the new AF-S NIKKOR 200-500MM F/5.6E ED VR and AF-S NIKKOR 24MM F/1.8G ED, photographers

will be able to envision and craft, unhindered by low-light or long distances, supported by technology that allows them to challenge themselves as photographers and artists."



Catch Your K-pop Stars on Mobile

New app streams

Those who are crazy about K-pop are in for a treat. A new live-streaming app called "V" was launched recently for both Android and iOS. This is a new video streaming service developed by the joint effort by major Korean entertainment management companies, as well as NAVER, Korea's number one internet mobile service.

From the last count, over 25 K-pop groups have signed up to the service, which includes Big Bang, SM Town, Infinite, Kara, GOT7 and Girls Day. It is expected that non-Korean celebrities will also be joining the service in the future. What's interesting about the app is that it allows the celebrities to engage with all their fans, an opportunity that will also be available to our local celebrities. Access to V is easy, requiring popular social network services like LINE or Facebook. The app will provide English

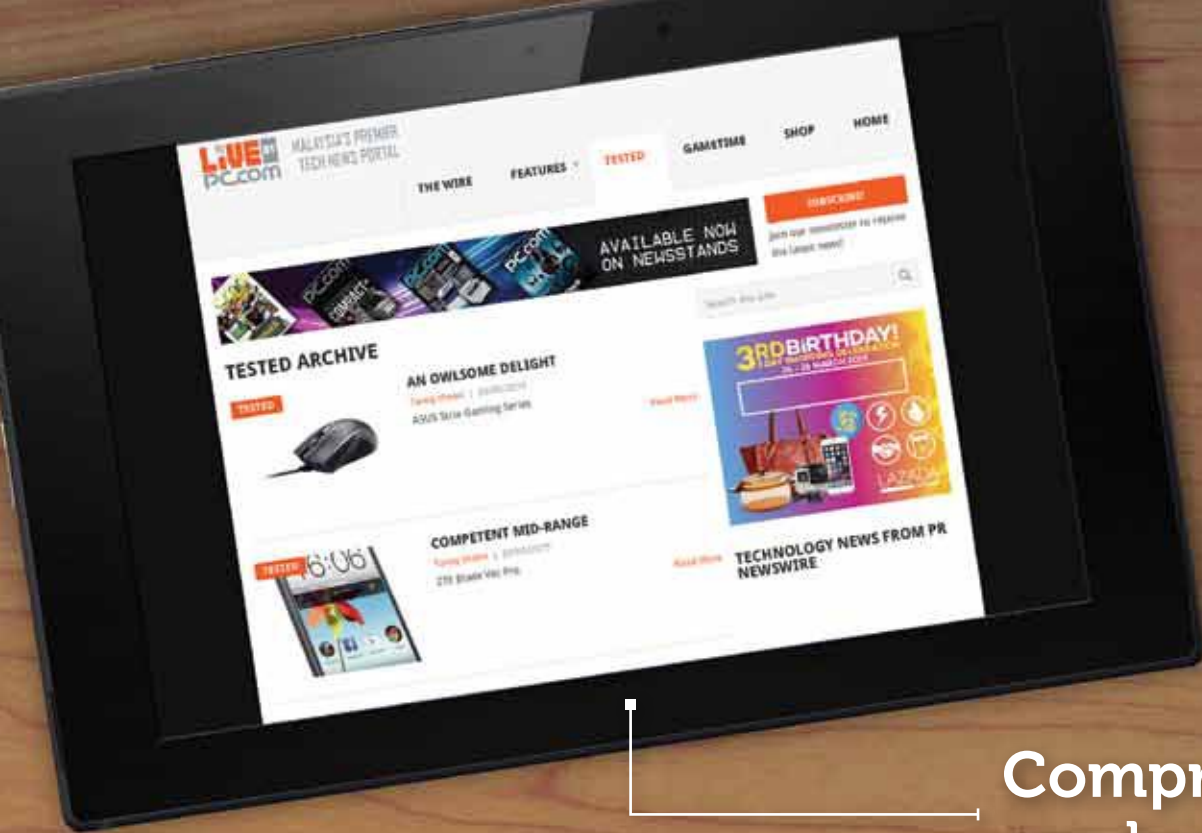
subtitle service, as well as Chinese and Japanese subtitle service in the near future.

Celebrities will each get their individual channels along with the 'Star Following' feature, which sends out alerts to followers whenever their favourite star is live.

Other features include; 'Upcoming', 'Chemi-beat', and a VoD (Video on Demand) service for those who miss out on a live-stream.

This new live broadcasting app, V, is now available on Google Playstore and the Apple App Store.





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IPHONE 5C – BIZARRE EXISTENCE

Apple's new iPhone 5C is a bizarre existence. It's a plastic iPhone, a far cry from the sleek, metallic iPhone 5S. It's a plastic iPhone, a far cry from the sleek, metallic iPhone 5S. It's a plastic iPhone, a far cry from the sleek, metallic iPhone 5S.



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Fostering Internet Safety

Digi launch CyberSAFETM Programme


Like many corporations, Digi does its best to contribute to society. Recently, the mobile telecommunications company launched a month-long competition called the Digi CyberSAFETM Video Script Competition, the fifth series in Digi's CyberSAFETM in Schools Programme 2015. This programme is a combined effort by Digi with CyberSecurity Malaysia, Childline Malaysia and the Ministry of Education.

A new campaign that was started this year, the competition for secondary school students ran from 7th August to 31st August 2015. In this competition, competitors must create scripts or homemade videos with a limit of five minutes on the topic of Internet Safety and Resiliency.

Digi's objective in running the programme was to help cultivate the awareness of Internet

safety in young students today, who are active users of the Internet. By conducting workshops for both students and teachers, the programme aims to show students safe online practices.

Last known numbers showed that 80,000 students, more than 5,000 school teachers,

and 1,000 Bestari ICT teachers from over 1,000 schools throughout the country have benefited from the programme. Furthermore, Digi aims to reach out to another 100,000 students in this series of online safety awareness campaigns. 



Running to the Fore


Garmin Malaysia launches Forerunner 225

Garmin Malaysia has recently launched the Forerunner 225, a watch that can measure your heart rate. This wrist watch is the first Garmin GPS running watch to be able to do so.

Developed by Mio, an award winning brand, the optical heart rate technology on the Forerunner 225 uses a colourful graphic interface that shows runners their zone and heart rate (in BPM) on the watch. Besides that, it has an accelerometer to record distance and pacing of the runner. Basically, it has many of the basic functions that fitness bands have.

"After more than 10 years of developing GPS running watches, we are very excited to team up with Mio to introduce our first device featuring wrist-based heart rate," said Dan Bartel, Vice President of Garmin World Wide Sales. While Liz Dickinson, CEO of Mio Global, said, "We are proud of our partnership with Garmin. When the leading brand in GPS teams up with a leading brand in wrist-based heart rate monitoring technology, it's a win for athletes at all levels." Dickinson

also explained that athletes now understand the importance of heart rate for training purposes, which is a factor that has made it a top feature in wearables today.

Currently available only at selected outlets: The Marathon Shop, New Balance and Sports Empire, the Forerunner 225 will retail at RM1,299. It will be sold in colours of black or red. 





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YOUR KIDS ONLINE: 5 WAYS TO KEEP THEM OUT OF HARM'S WAY

For kids, going to school or being at home these days means using mobile devices and computers to stay connected to the Internet as their primary source of information. As such, it's important that parents and teachers are aware both of the risks associated with the incorrect use of this tool and the way to protect themselves while surfing the internet in order to benefit from the technology in a safe manner.

Sharing photos, videos, status updates, messages and other types of information are part of daily life for children and teenagers, and smartphone usage is only bound to only increase. As such, parents need to be more attentive to ensure appropriate use of the internet by their children, while teachers need to teach their pupils about healthy use of the technology.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO BE FACED?

It is undeniable that our use of technology is growing all the time. Furthermore, in Latin America it is increasingly common to find government programs that support children in gaining access to technology, which in turn is increasing the number of people with a new tool: computers. Let's take a look at the challenges faced by parents and teachers.

TEACH THEM HOW TO BROWSE

The internet is a vast source of information, much of which could contain offensive or even dangerous content. Keeping these issues in mind, the first challenge for parents and teachers is to teach children how to browse and distinguish what is really useful and helpful.

INTERNET IS FULL OF PHISHING SITES

Malicious code, phishing scams and malicious websites are just some of the IT threats out there in vast numbers on the internet. A second step,

then, is to understand the potential economic cost and the cost in terms of your personal information that these threats can bring about.

BE AWARE OF GROOMING

A third challenge for parents and teachers relates to grooming, a risk that tends to increase in likelihood with intense use of the Internet. Grooming is a process whereby an adult attempts to persuade a child to engage in sexual activities, by developing an emotional connection with the child and a sense of trust.

SENDING INTIMATE MATERIAL TO UNKNOWN

It is essential to educate children about ensuring privacy while online. Practices like sending messages or photos with erotic content are increasingly common and can endanger youngsters.

USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Lastly, there is a real need to teach kids about using social networks responsibly, as these tend to be the platforms on which cyberbullying and harassment take place. As such, it's important for parents and educators to pay attention to children's behavior to detect any possible instances of this and intervene in good time.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO LOOK AFTER THEM?

The first step for parents and teachers, keeping in mind the speed with which technology develops, is to equip themselves with the knowledge they need in order to educate kids appropriately. Once they are aware of the current risks and threats, they can face up to the challenges by engaging in the following good practices in IT security:

1. The most important point is to create a space in which to talk about threats and habits

online. To do this, parents need to understand the threats and explain to their children in what ways they could be in danger. Furthermore, teachers must incentivize responsible use of technology by maintaining standards of behavior from the real world.

2. We also have to remember that we are responsible for what we upload to the internet and that the moment we post a photo or video, we lose control of the material and have no way of knowing how it might be used.

3. We have to be careful with the types of information we post online. Details like our home address and telephone numbers should not be shared on social networks.

4. The internet makes it easier for people to be anonymous, so we can't know with absolute certainty who is on the other side of the social network, unless it's someone we know in real life. For these reasons, we have to be very careful with messages from people we don't know who try to contact us via social networks.

5. Have a security solution including an antivirus software, social network monitoring and a firewall for all your equipment. It's important to emphasize that desktop computers are not the only equipment that needs to be protected, as devices like smartphones and tablets also can be targets for attack.

Being aware of the full extent of technology's reach and the risks that come with using it badly are the first steps in ensuring that children and teenagers can enjoy the benefits of technology in safe manner.

THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND DETECTION

In today's ever changing landscape of computer threats, it is not enough just to use standard malware detection techniques (comparing all files to a known virus signature database), but it is also important to implement heuristic proactive approach to malware detections. Here we explain how one of the techniques ESET uses for detection of malware.

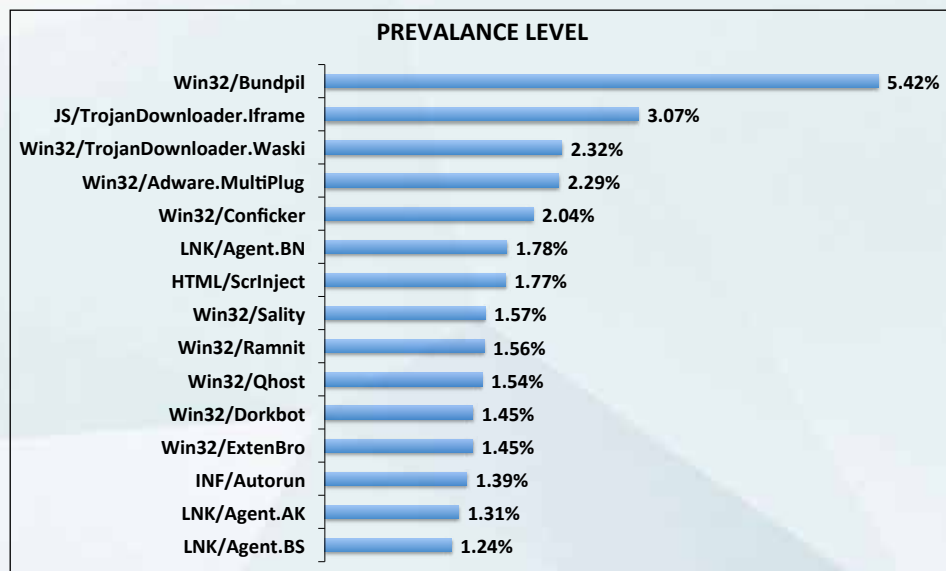
ADVANCED MEMORY SCANNER

Advanced Memory Scanner couples nicely with Exploit Blocker, as it is also designed to strengthen the protection against modern malware.

In an effort to evade detection, malware writers extensively use file obfuscation or/and encryption. This causes problems with unpacking and might pose a challenge to bypass for ordinary anti-malware techniques, such as emulation or heuristics.

To tackle this problem, the Advanced Memory Scanner monitors the behavior of a malicious process and scans it once it decloaks in the memory. This allows for effective infection prevention even from heavily obfuscated malware.

ESET THREAT RADAR REPORT FOR MALAYSIA TOP COMPUTER THREATS IN MALAYSIA



SOURCE: ESET THREATSENSE.NET®

THREAT IN DETAIL:

JS/TrojanDownloader.Iframe

Variants: JS/TrojanDownloader.Iframe.NKE, JS/TrojanDownloader.Iframe.NJJ

Aliases: Trojan-Clicker.JS.Agent.ev, Mal/Iframe-F.JS/Iframe.KT

Category: Trojan horse

Description: JS/TrojanDownloader.Iframe is a trojan that redirects the browser to a specific URL location with malicious software. The program code of the malware is usually embedded in HTML pages.

WHAT IS A TROJAN HORSE?

A trojan horse is a broad term for malicious software used for various nefarious purposes, often either destructive or for purposes of data theft. The determinative difference between a trojan and a virus or worm, is that it is not able to replicate or infect files on its own. Therefore it must rely on other means to get onto victims' computer systems. Its name, derived from the story of the conquest of Troy by smuggling soldiers into the city inside a massive wooden horse, suggests that it disguises its true function, often employing social engineering to achieve being executed.

UNIVERSAL REMOTE CAN 'HACK INTO ANY CAR'

A white hat hacker has developed a "universal remote" that is capable of unlocking the latest hi-tech cars and garages.

Samy Kamkar, an independent security researcher, says his tiny radio device can bypass "rolling code" security, which keeps new cars and modern garages safe and secure.

The idea behind this system is that every time you lock or unlock your vehicle or garage door, a new and unique set of codes is generated – it is never the same. However, the 130 MYR key, dubbed RollJam, is able to exploit a fundamental flaw in this system – the lack of a timeout on the codes. As such, the device is able to intercept the newly generated code before it reaches the car via a radio signal, forcing the driver to press the button on his key at least twice (an inconvenience that can be easily overlooked by the victim). These codes can then be used by a hacker to gain entry into a vehicle at a later date. The owner of the car simply thinks his fob is playing up or that he hasn't pressed hard enough on the button – he has no idea that the security of his car has been compromised.

The hacker has so far tested his remote on a number of major car manufacturers, including brands like Ford, Volkswagen, Chrysler, Cadillac, Toyota, Nissan and Lotus.

Car hacking, which extends beyond entry and into control of a vehicle, has emerged as a key security issue in recent years.

Recently, two hackers demonstrated their ability to remotely take control of a Jeep. Not only were they able to modify the air-conditioning system of the vehicle and play around with the radio, they were also able to take control of the throttle and cut its transmission.



Alcatel Returns

Alcatel and Lazada team up to introduce the OneTouch to Malaysia

Alcatel is a name that hasn't been seen for a while in the phone market in Malaysia. Now though, the company is about to take Malaysia seriously as it has partnered with online retail site Lazada to bring in the Alcatel OneTouch Flash Plus to Malaysian shores.

Priced at RM 499, this entry level Android phone is powered by an Octa-core Cortex A-53 processor and sports 2GB of RAM and 12GB of storage space. Coming with a 13MP rear camera with AF and a front-facing 8MP camera, Alcatel has promoted the OneTouch Flash Plus as a smartphone that is perfect for those who are looking for an entry-level smartphone with an above average camera. PC



Danish Tide

TIDAL extends partnership with Telenor Denmark

Music mogul Jay-Z's very own music streaming site, TIDAL, has recently announced an extended partnership with Telenor Denmark, the parent company of local telecommunications operator Digi. This cooperation builds on previous successful partnerships, technology integration and TIDAL's recent brand re-launch. Telenor Denmark will expand TIDAL to cover the complete portfolio of sub-brands and support TIDAL with marketing, which includes TV, Cinema, Print and Online advertising.

"We are happy to extend the partnership with TIDAL to include all our consumer brands. Digital music is a key component for Telenor to transform into a data centric carrier, and we are looking forward to further contribute to the streaming growth in Denmark together with TIDAL," says

Kare Carlsen, Head of Digital Services & New Revenue Streams from Telenor Denmark.

It is currently speculated that

this extension in partnership would benefit Digi in some way, but as of now, there is no information as to how the deal will benefit Digi. PC





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TO KEEP A BOND
WITH MY SON

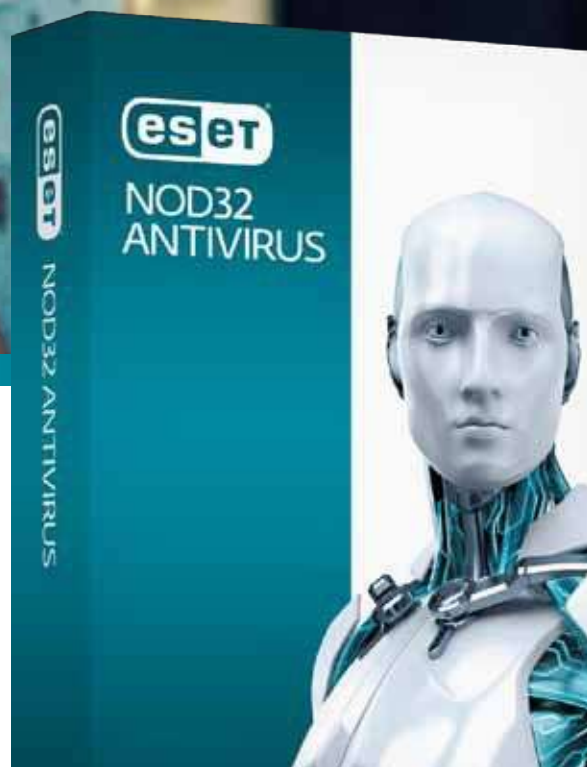
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Malware Scandal

Kaspersky alleged to have used fake malware in tricking competitors

According to a report by Reuters, anti-virus Kaspersky has been accused by two former employees for releasing fake malwares into customers' files and having competing anti-virus software flag these malware as dangerous.

The employees claimed that staffs of the company have been spreading these sort of malware for decades as a campaign to undermine their competitors' protection tools. In some cases, orders for these actions came directly from Eugene Kaspersky, the founder of the company. However, a spokesperson for the Russian lab has come out denying the allegations.

While the allegations made by the employees have yet to be proven, this would not have been the first time Kaspersky was accused of wrongdoing, as the company had created fake malware and labelling them dangerous on a previous occasion. PC



7th Generation UI

Xiaomi Reveals MIUI 7 and the Redmi Note 2

Chinese tech maker Xiaomi has finally unveiled the latest iteration of the company's own UI, MIUI 7. This comprehensive upgrade to the company's own Android-based OS now sports a livelier interface with better performance, battery-saving optimisations and a wider variety of personalisation options.

New to MIUI 7 is facial recognition as the phone is now capable of identifying the people in your photos and grouping those images together in the device's gallery. "We are taking our UI to a new level with MIUI 7, which is designed for you and aimed at making your smartphone your closest companion," says Lei Jun, Xiaomi CEO and co-founder.

A new interface wasn't the only thing that was shown off as the company has pulled back the curtains on the Redmi Note 2 as well. Starting

at RMB 799, the Redmi Note 2 comes with a 2.0 GHz MediaTek Helio X10 processor, 2GB of RAM and 16GB of storage. The augmented variant of the

Redmi Note 2, called the Redmi Note 2 Prime, will retail for RMB 999 and sports a 2.2GHz chip, 2GB of RAM and 32GB of storage. PC



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Gear Up

Samsung reveals the existence of the Gear S2

During the launch of the Note 5 and the S6 Edge+ that was held at the Lincoln Centre at New York City, Samsung CEO and President of IT & Mobile Division JK Shin revealed the circular version of the Gear S2 to the audience.

While no solid information about the Gear S2 has been revealed, leaked information reveals that the Gear S2 will be running on Samsung's own OS, Tizen. Other rumours surrounding the Gear S2 include the availability of three variants.

Based on the previous iteration of the Gear S, it would be interesting to see if the SIM card slot would be making a comeback on the Gear S2. The presence of Tizen could also mean that the Gear S2 would only pair with devices that utilises the same OS. Either way, the overall design of the Gear S2 seems to be a step up from the Gear S, as the smartwatch has a design that seems to be influenced by the realm of fashion. 



Job Losses


Lenovo to cut jobs after profit drops

In less upbeat news, Lenovo is expected to cut down 10 percent of its non-manufacturing staff as the company has suffered a loss in overall profits.

The loss is seemingly attributed to the phone division as it has underperformed with

over USD 300 million in unsold phones to be written off. The layout of staff is aimed to save USD 650 million in the second half of the year.

In response to the layouts that are about to happen, Lenovo CEO Yang Yuanqing has stood by his decision to buy Motorola

and plans to restructure the mobile phone divisions. He ceded that doing so would require a couple of quarters and would cost the company USD 600 million in order to gain some footing in the extremely competitive environment. 

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ENGINEERED FOR BUSINESS

Stay Puff

Google Android Marshmallow announced

Google's habit of naming its Android iterations after sweets continues as the company announces that its next version of the popular OS would be called Android Marshmallow.

Formerly called version "M", Marshmallow was available for developers to build on ever since Google I/O, which was held back in late May. Some of the new features of Marshmallow include Google Now On Tap and the arrangement of apps in Alphabetical order.

With the final preview update going online, the Android developers team have officially announced the Android 6.0 SDK and will be opening up Google Play for apps that target level API 23 for Android Marshmallow. PC



Windfall Funding

GrabTaxi secures RM1.4 billion in funding

In 2012, a taxi booking app called "MyTeksi" was launched. This app allows users to type in their destination and the nearest taxi will heed their call and respond to the request. Since then, the app has been renamed to GrabTaxi, although the company retains the MyTeksi name in Malaysia, and has grown into a billion ringgit entity across

26 cities in 6 countries and 111,000 drivers under its tab across Southeast Asia.

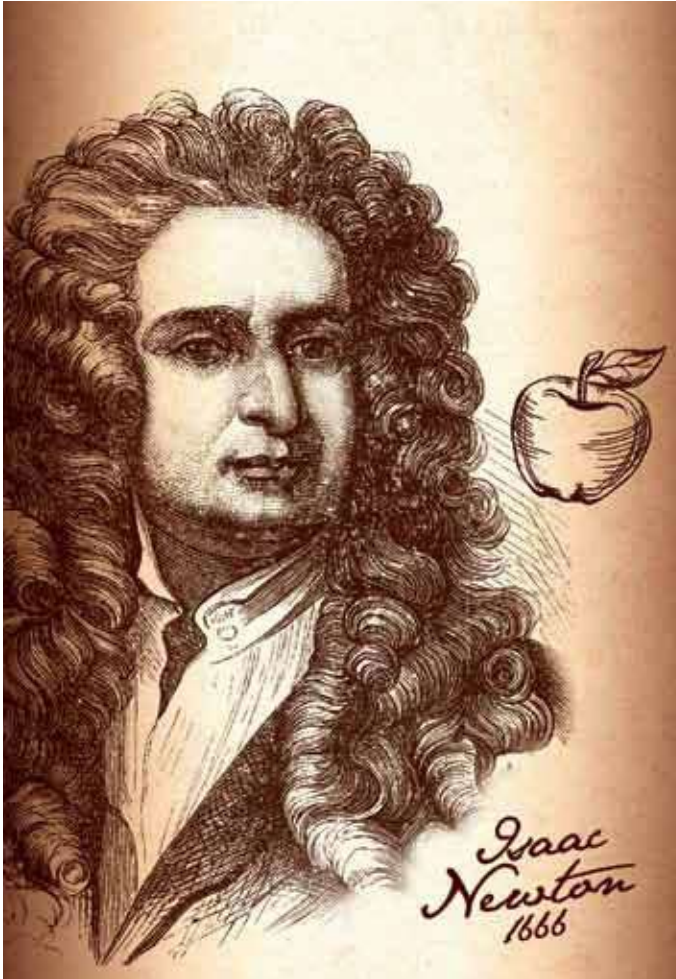
Seeing potential in the app, the company has received a USD 350 million investment from US investment firm Coatue Management L.L.C.. Other investments were made by China's sovereign wealth fund, China Investment Corporation, Didi Kuaidi, and existing shareholders, bringing

the total funding received by GrabTaxi to a cool USD 700 million, making it one of the best funded startups in SEA.

"This investment is not only a statement on GrabTaxi's dominance in the region, but also the growth potential of Southeast Asia on a global level," says Anthony Tan, Group CEO and Co-Founder of GrabTaxi. PC



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ENGINEERED FOR BUSINESS

Concert Postponed

Video Games Live delayed to next year

Originally planned to be held at the Putra Indoor Stadium during Merdeka Day weekend, the much anticipated return of Video Games Live to Malaysia has been delayed until the 27th of February 2016.

According to the organisers, the postponement of the concert is due to the Bersih 4.0 rally that was held on the same day as the concert. As the Putra Indoor Stadium is scheduled for renovations in September, it is possible that the venue for Video Games Live will be moved as well.

In the meantime, the organisers of Video Games Live, 11pass11 events will assist current ticket holders should they wish to get a refund. The organisers have also said that those who hold on to their tickets will receive a limited edition VGL wristband for their troubles. 




Royal Drones

Malaysian Police to use drones for surveillance

Drones have already been part of the police forces' arsenal in countries such as the United Kingdom and France. Now, you can add Malaysia to the list as the Malaysian Royal Police will soon be utilising unmanned aerial vehicles for crowd control and search and rescue purposes.

Inspector General of the Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar has said that a special unit trained to handle the UAVs will be set up. He has assured the public that the drones will not be used for spying as the handlers will need to go through intensive training on matters of intrusion and privacy law, before being handed the controls of one.

These drones, which are equipped with closed circuit cameras and facial recognition software, is expected to be deployed during the Bersih 4.0 rally. 



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Built Tough

Panasonic brings in the latest series of Toughbooks and Toughpad

Panasonic has recently announced the expansion of its enterprise-grade device by unveiling the newest additions to its Toughbook and Toughpad line of enterprise-grade device.

For the Toughbooks, Panasonic has revealed the CF-MX4 and the CF-54. Coming with Windows 8.1 Pro and measuring at 21mm and 29.8mm respectively, the CF-MX4 and the CF-54 are among the lightest laptops in the Toughbook line. The CF-MX4 is a business-rugged laptop that comes with a unique 'honeycomb' design for improved strength and comes equipped with a 5th generation Intel Core i5-5300U vPro processor and 4GB of RAM. The CF-54 is a semi-rugged laptop that also features the unique 'honeycomb' design for improve strength, as well as MIL-STD 810G certification and a spill-resistant keyboard and touchpad. It is powered by the 5th generation Core i5-5300U vPro processor and 4GB of memory.

On the Toughpad side of things, the latest entry in Panasonic's line of durable

tablets is the FZ-X1. Featuring a 1.7GHz quad-core Qualcomm S4 Pro processor, the FZ-X1 comes with various features such as a 6200mAh hot swappable battery, which lasts up to 14 hours and configuration options such as an integrated 1D/2D

barcode reader and attachable magnetic stripe reader.

The Toughbook CF-MX4, Toughbook CF-54 and Toughpad FZ-X1 are now available in Malaysia and are priced at USD 2,349, USD 1,949 and USD 1,499 respectively. **PC**



The Lawsuit Affair

Ashley Madison gets hit with a USD 578 million lawsuit



Ashley Madison, the infamous website whose tagline is "life is short, have an affair", has now found itself in hot water as users of the website are suing the company that runs it, Avid Media Life Inc., for USD 578 million.

Quite recently, Ashley Madison had 9.7GB of data stolen by a hacker group. Said information was then released in the form of a torrent on the darknet. The data that was stolen includes many email addresses, home addresses, credit card details and message history linked to individuals with high positions in governments, the police force and the military.

The key point in this lawsuit is that the site allows users to delete their data for a fee. However, many claim that despite paying the fee, some of their personal information was still available on the leaked document. **PC**

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Price Drop

OPPO slashes prices on its phones

As smartphones get cheaper and cheaper, smartphone companies need to adjust their prices accordingly in order to avoid a lost. Such is the case of OPPO as it has cut prices across its range of smartphones in order to shore up sales for the 3rd quarter of 2015.

For now, the price cuts affect 3 models, the Neo 5, the R1L and the R5. The Neo 5, originally priced at RM 538, now retails for RM 398. The 5-inch Full HD OPPO R1L, which was priced at RM 1,098 at launch, is now selling for RM 798. Finally, the OPPO R5, which was once the thinnest smartphone in the world, is now priced at RM 1,398, down from RM 1,598. 




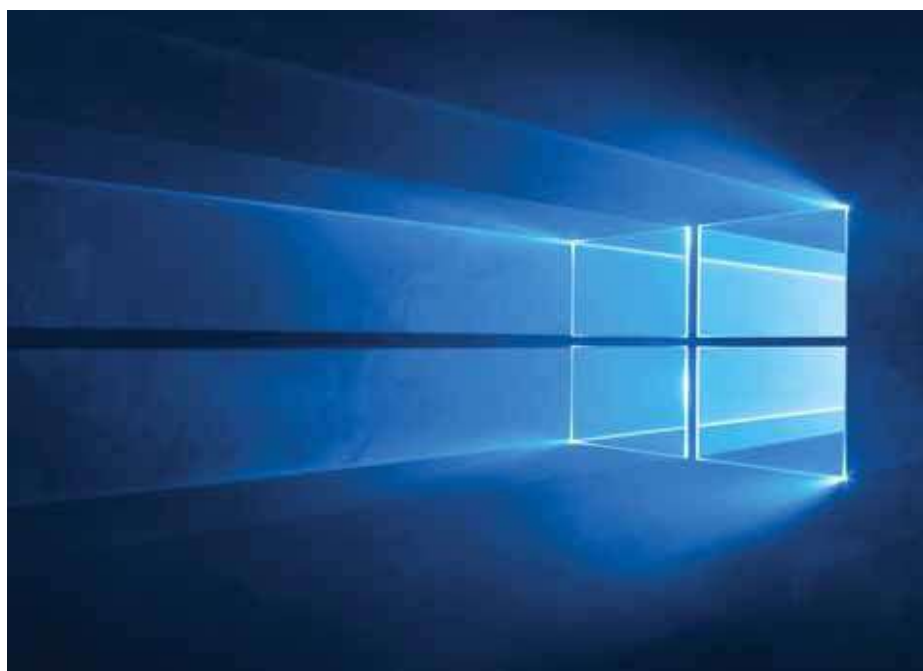
Dominated By 10

Windows 10 is now in over 75 million devices

It seems that reception to Microsoft's latest OS has been encouraging as Microsoft has announced that Windows 10 is now being utilised by 75 million users in just over a month.

To celebrate this incredible milestone, Microsoft has released some stats for Windows 10. More than 90,000 unique PC or tablet models have upgraded to Windows 10 ever since it first went live and games have been a hit on the OS, as 10 million achievements were unlocked on Solitaire Collection and Minecraft.

Part of the reason why the launch of Windows 10 is such a success can be attributed to the rave reviews the OS has received from critics, with many lauding Windows 10 as one of the most forward thinking Windows ever. 



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Malaysia Celebrates Windows 10



K Raman, Managing Director, Microsoft Malaysia and Bruce Howe, Head, Consumer Channel Group, Microsoft Malaysia posing with partners; (starting from second left) Tony Leong, Head of Consumer, Lenovo; Daniel Chia, Sales Director of iPro; KT Ong, Country Manager of Dell; Ricky Tan, Managing Director of Acer; Jimmy Lin, Country Manager of Asus; Kym Lim, Country Manager of HP; and Kelvin Pah, Sales and Marketing Director, SNS


Microsoft Malaysia recently celebrated a milestone event together with media and partners to welcome Microsoft's brand new operating system, Windows 10, which has been built to enable organisations and people to do great things.

Touted as the most secure Windows ever, the improved modern OS is now

available as a free upgrade to every qualified Windows 7 and 8.1 user for the first year, or with new PCs and tablets. In addition, Windows 10 is delivered as a service and kept automatically up-to-date with the latest features and security updates.

"Since the global launch of Windows 10 on 29 July, Microsoft has seen as many as 14 million people around the world upgrade to Windows 10 within the first 24

hours, with reviews and customer feedback overwhelmingly positive around the globe," said K Raman, Managing Director, Microsoft Malaysia.

"Windows 10 is a product that was truly built by the community, for the community and we will keep it this way by continuing the Windows Insider Program and accepting new feedback to make the product even better." 

Better and Faster

HP introduced the HP PageWide XL 8000, offering the fastest large-format production printing available in colour and black-and-white, besides the new HP SmartStream software to optimise workflow and new large-format supplies and printing materials, including HP PageWide Pigment Inks, HP Universal Bond Paper, and HP Production Matte, Gloss and Satin Poster Papers.


HP PageWide XL 8000 does the job of two printers in one single device, providing

monochrome and colour prints at breakthrough speeds up to 60 percent faster than the fastest monochrome light-emitting diode (LED) printer.

The new printer will enable high-volume reprographic houses and enterprise central reprographic departments to produce computer-aided design (CAD) drawings and will open new business opportunities with geographic information system (GIS) maps, point-of-sale applications and posters.

It offers high-end production printing at revolutionary speeds up to

30 D/A1-size prints per minute as well as two 775 millilitre ink cartridges per colour with automatic switching and up to six rolls – more than 3,900 feet (1,200 metres) – of media for sustained productivity.

"Our large-format printing customers are continually exploring ways to improve productivity, streamline workflow and reduce costs," said Lee Kok Wai, Country Business Manager, HP Designjet Large Format Printer, HP. 

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World's First!

Samsung Malaysia Electronics did it again by announcing the world's first low temperature video wall, UD55E-S, which is specifically pre-calibrated for the broadcast industry.

The UD55E-S has a specialised panel with a lower colour temperature range of 2800k-6500k that corresponds to broadcast camera standards, ensuring that the colours of news footage and graphics are displayed accurately at all viewing angles.

"As a trusted global leader in display technology, we always strive to produce professional displays that meet the demands of our partners and customers. To deliver a quality viewing experience for home viewers, broadcasters require equipment with higher standards that are tailored for their unique environment," said Lee Sang Hoon, President of Samsung Malaysia Electronics Sdn Bhd.

"The UD55E-S addresses this challenge as it is specially optimised for the broadcast industry. With this technology, our broadcast customers will reap time and cost savings with ease of maintenance and minimum tuning while end-

viewers enjoy more true-to-life images and footage on their television screens. With our commitment to innovation, Samsung will continue to bring about cutting-edge technology that helps our enterprise customers run their businesses more efficiently and productively." 




VADS TIER III CERTIFIED

VADS Berhad (VADS), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Telekom Malaysia Berhad (TM), recently received the Tier III Certification of Design Documents for its Nusajaya Data Centre (NJDC) from Uptime Institute. NJDC, the company's largest purpose-built data centre to date, is now the third data centre in the country to achieve this certification.

Commenting on this achievement, Massimo Migliuolo, Chief Executive Officer of VADS said: "This is a great milestone for VADS and TM as a group. Receiving this certification will not only increase our customers' confidence level in our facilities but also in the services that we offer. We are committed in ensuring that our Data Centre (DC) facilities and services are top of its class in order for us to deliver enhanced Cloud and

Smart Services to our customers and the community, as part of our DC and Cloud transformational journey."

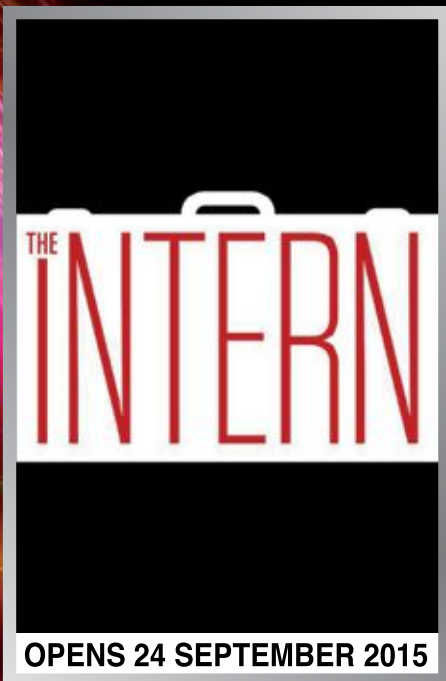
"Besides the NJDC, VADS and TM will also be investing in constructing another purpose-built data centre in Klang Valley,

which will complement and enhance our products and services. These DCs will run on TM's unparalleled connectivity services and will be certified by the industry's best standards," he added. 



A  Company

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BAE Systems Extends Malaysian Cyber Security Portfolio

In line with its ongoing commitment to strengthening the cyber security landscape in Malaysia, BAE Systems announced that it is bringing cloud-based cyber security to commercial organisations in Malaysia for the first time.

BAE Systems protects the digital assets of more than 5,500 organisations worldwide. The company's security business, BAE Systems Applied Intelligence - named Malaysia's "Cyber Security Company of the Year 2014" - has a strong presence in Malaysia with over 275 employees at its Global Engineering Centre, located in Kuala Lumpur, which focuses on local delivery and support of the company's cyber and financial crime detection services.

Building on its strong presence and portfolio in the country, BAE Systems is augmenting its security offering of on-premise and managed security services with new cloud-based services. This is a natural progression to meet

high customer demand for a wide and flexible portfolio of cyber security solutions.

With 95% of cyber attacks starting with an email message, the first set of cloud-based products that BAE Systems is introducing in Malaysia comprises BAE Systems' Email Protection Services (EPS),

which provides comprehensive protection against advanced threats. The offerings include: Zero Day Prevention, Insider Threat Prevention, Email Data Loss Prevention (DLP), Email Encryption, Email Anti-Virus and Anti-Spam, Email Archiving and Email Business Continuity. **PC**



Senior BAE Systems executives including Nick Turnbull (right), Director, Cyber Security, Asia, BAE Systems Applied Intelligence, speak to members of the media

Tech Start-ups Raise RM2.15mn

Five start-ups, enabled by Infinite Ventures, one of the key partners under Cyberview Living Lab - Accelerator (CLLA-IV) programme, successfully raised up to RM2.15 million (mn) following their business presentations to top investment

and entrepreneurial communities, industry leaders and government bodies at IV Demo Day recently.

The IV Demo Day also saw Laundry Done, an on-demand laundry delivery service, announced the launch of its app, while Ittify, a cloud-based platform that

automates and simplifies the process of finding hidden and relevant influencers for user brand needs, revealed its recently secured investment in the form of a seven-man tech team from Geomash Sdn Bhd. The public version of the app will be launched in August this year. **PC**



- 01 -

ZELOSLASER CUTTER 2.0

- 02 -

TAGONCE

- 05 -

MINIM

- 06 -

REDUX COURG

- 12 -

SCHRADE TACTICAL PENS

- 17 -

R2-D2 VACUUM

14

MINIPRESSO



Gizmos

where technology meets lifestyle

02



06



12



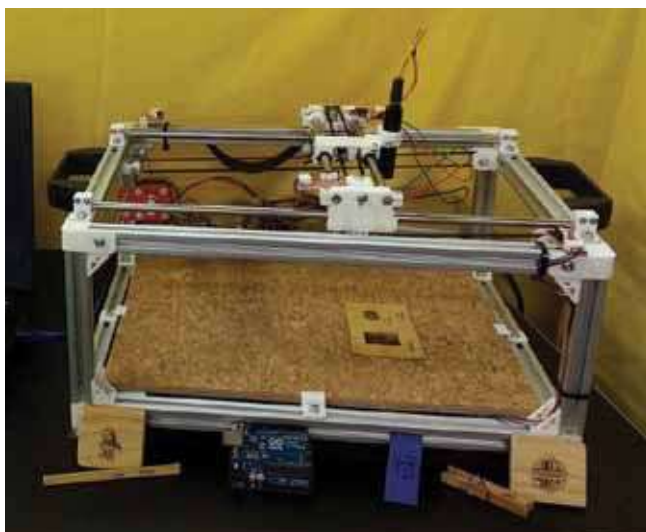
17



01 ZELOSLASER CUTTER V2.0

3D printers are pretty cool stuff. But do you know what's cooler than a 3D printer? A laser cutter. The ZelosLaser Cutter v2.0 is a laser cutter that is both sturdy and compact. It comes with a laser that allows you to engrave or cut out pictures with precision. Also, you're cutting stuff up with a laser, which is always cool.

www.instructables.com



02 TAGONCE

Have you ever jotted down your contact information and attach it to your luggage when you are about to go overseas? Well, the Tagonce is made for you. This thing is a tag that comes with a QR code. Whenever someone scans the code, it will provide the location and contact information of the owner of the luggage. If the owner needs to change the contact details, all they need to do is to use the app that is paired with the Tagonce.

www.tagonce.com



03 DM1

The easiest way to describe the DM1 is that it is a very simplistic, yet tough cardholder. When we say cardholder, we meant credit cards, ATM cards and ID cards instead of business cards. Featuring a minimalistic designed and available in nickle, titanium or carbon fibre variations, the DM1 is meant to replace your wallet with a slimmer alternative.

www.decadentminimalist.com



04 MINIM

Ever wished you could compose a song while you're away from the studio? Here is something that might spark your interest then. The minim is a MIDI controller that would be familiar to those who've dabbled in electronic music production. Unlike those rather huge pieces of equipment, the minim is designed to be portable, allowing you to compose on your tablet or smartphone.

www.lividinstruments.com

05 REDUX COURG

As smartwatches start getting more and more prominent in the market, sometimes it is just good to take a step back into something traditional. The Redux COURG is a regular wrist watch but with a twist - it is powered by the wearer's movement instead of a battery. Built with sturdy materials, designed with functionalism in mind, and able to withstand high water pressure for those who are divers, the COURG is a watch for the outdoorsman.

www.reduxwatch.com



06 PROSOUNDS X-PRO HEARING PROTECTION

While it may look like a normal pair of wireless earphones, the X-Pro is actually a pair of earplugs, and a rather advance one at that. By sticking it in your ears and pressing a button, the device would protect your ears by giving you a noise reduction of 30dB. Want to hear normally again? You don't even have to take those earplugs out as, with another push of the button, the device will open its acoustic valve, allowing sound to flow freely like there isn't an obstruction in your ears.

www.prosounds.com





07 MAGKEY

Does the sound of jingling keys irritate you? Then the Magkey is the solution for that particular problem. The Magkey is basically a neodymium magnet that you can stick to your keys, and by that I mean the magnet has an adhesive coating on it. Once you attach it to your keys, magnetism would force the keys to stick together, eliminating the metal-on-metal clanking sound whenever you move around.

www.keymagnets.com

08 LIGHT PULSE

Charging your devices is not exactly the most exciting thing in the world, so why not make a light show out of it while waiting for your devices to be fully charged? The Light Plus is a six feet long cable that is electroluminescent. When your device is charging, the cable will light up, depicting the electrical charge flowing into your device. When the device is fully charged, the light on the wire will shut off.

www.pilotelectronic.com



09 WALLGERS HANDCRAFTED WALLETS

Unlike the DM1, the Wallgers Handcrafted Wallet is a more traditional wallet. That said, it is also a wallet with some new tricks up its sleeves. For starters, it carries a battery pack that allows you to charge your devices on the go. It also has an RFID firewall, which helps protect you from those new-age credit card information theft.

www.wallgers.com



10 SOLAR-BREEZE NX

We're not sure how many of our readers have swimming pools, but if you do have one, then this device might interest you. The Solar-breeze NX is a robotic pool cleaner that is powered by solar. Basically, it's a Roomba for your pool that runs on solar energy. The cleaner comes with paddles that allows it to move on the water, cleaning the surface of the water automatically.

www.solar-breeze.com

11 SQUAIR MOBILE

The SQUAIR Mobile is a portable air cleaner that is designed to be used in the car, office or room. Utilising Non Thermal Plasma, the device is built to provide clean air by tackling pollution, smoke, pollen, odours, mould and other harmful substances and gas.

www.squair3.com



12 SCHRADE TACTICAL PENS

What's so special about this particular pen that it needs to be called a tactical pen? Well, aside from being a normal pen that you can write with, it also comes with a glass-break pointed tip, meant for use in emergency situations. As for the pen part, it comes in ballpoint, fountain, and whistle top options.

www.taylorbrandsllc.com

13 NANO Q4

Ladies and gentlemen, meet the smallest quadcopter in the world. Measuring at 5cm x 5cm and weighing in at just 11.6 grams, this little drone is an agile thing, capable of performing 360-degree acrobatics. It also comes with LED lights, allowing you to pilot this little thing at night.

www.hubsan.com



14 MINIPRESSO

If you fancy an espresso in the office but don't have an espresso maker in your office, you might want to consider the Minipresso. As the name implies, the Minipresso is a portable espresso maker. However, in order to make a cup of espresso, some manual labour is required. You'll need to pump the machine in order to brew the coffee, but the result would probably taste better after some effort is put into it.

www.wacaco.com



15 QUICKLOCK

These days, even padlocks are getting more sophisticated. Case in point, the QuickLock. The QuickLock is a keyless padlock that is unlocked by either a phone, a fob, or a ring. Now you'll never have to worry about losing your keys ever again.

www.thequicklock.com





16 SCOSCHE REVOLT

Even though power banks are common these day, we here at PC.com believe that car chargers are yet to be obsolete. That is why the Scosche reVOLT is here. Noted as being the world's smallest car charger, the reVOLT is capable of feeding 12 watts of power to your USB-powered device, charging them up in no time at all.

www.scosche.com

17 R2-D2 DESK VACUUM CLEANER

R2-D2 is a multipurpose service droid that made its appearance in Star Wars. Now, R2-D2 can work for you as a vacuum cleaner for your desk.

www.firebox.com



18 OTTERBOX MYSYMMETRY

Fickle about the looks of your phone? Then get this latest phone cover from OtterBox, which allows you to swap out the back part of your cover with a personalised art, whether hand drawn by that someone special, or printed on paper and slipped into the slot for those who are artistically challenged. The case comes in red, blue and pink, with grey and black coming soon.

RM169 | www.otterbox.asia





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- Tropicana City Mall (shop-in-shop inside Borders)
- Queens Bay Mall Penang (shop-in-shop inside Borders)
- Gurney Plaza Penang

JABRA SPORT COACH

Your workouts should count and Jabra's Sport Coach Wireless is here to help. It is the world's first wireless cross training solution that can deliver personal coaching directly to you via in-ear audio. With it and the integrated TrackFit motion sensor, this device can help you plan, track, coach, and spur you on your workout, all while listening to your favourite tracks at the same time. What's more, it is completely wireless, allowing you to concentrate on your session without dangling cables distracting you. Even hardcore workout sessions won't keep this earphone down, as the Sport Coach can run up to 5.5 hours. Using the Jabra Sound app, you can not only store your own music, but also stream YouTube audio with Dolby sound enhancement for greater audio quality. Intense workouts aren't about to dislodge them either, as it comes with multiple EarWing and EarGels sizes so that you can find the best fit for your ears. The Jabra Sport Coach is now available in blue, red and yellow.



JAWBONE UP2

Fitness tracking just gained an all new style in the Jawbone UP2! This fitness band is an adjustable one-size-fits-all that can track your number of steps, exercises, sleeping hours, and more. It's also able to track your calorie and nutrient intake with the UP App Food Store, in order to determine if you are eating right. For those who need some personal coaching, there are even personalised insights from a clever little feature called the Smart Coach, which helps by providing you with tips on healthier living. Got problems waking up in the morning? No problem, the UP2's Smart Alarm will wake you up at the optimal time using simple vibrations. It even has an Idle Alert feature to tell you when to stop being a coach potato. Lastly, you can express your competitiveness via a leaderboard that tracks how your stats compare to friends and family.



JAWBONE UP3

Want something a bit more advanced? Try the Jawbone UP3 with its Advanced Activity feature. It not only does what the UP2 does, it also gives you the Advanced Sleep feature. No, it doesn't help you sleep better directly, but this feature is able to track your actual sleep stages of REM, light sleep and deep sleep. By using it with the Smart Coach feature, you can better maximise and improve on your sleep quality.



OTTERBOX SYMMETRY SERIES LIMITED EDITION

There's never enough Otterbox and this round we have a Limited Edition that has an Alpha Glass Privacy screen protector, tailored to fit your case. Tough and mean, yet at the same time sleek and pocket-friendly, this anti-scratch and anti-shatter screen protector uses the reactive-touch technology to prevent people who like to peek over your shoulder from seeing what's on your screen. The case itself is built to survive, with single piece of synthetic rubber interior with honeycomb coring that helps absorb shock, and a hard polycarbonate body to avoid scratches. With this casing, you can be assured that your iPhone 6 can take a brutal amount of punishment even if you have butter fingers.



PLANTRONICS BACKBEAT SENSE

With today's technology, even headphones can be smart. Check out Plantronics' BackBeat Sense wireless headphones, which has the ability to automatically pause when you take it off, or resume audio playback when you put it back on. It's able to interface with two Bluetooth devices simultaneously, either a smartphone or a tablet, from as far as 100 metres away! This headphone can give you endless hours of audio bliss, as it can stream up to 18 hours of streaming wirelessly, and you can keep it plugged on to let it go nonstop. Since it has a mic, you can use it to answer or make phone calls, and whenever a call is on, your music pauses for your conversation.

PLANTRONICS BACKBEAT FIT

Here's another option for those who want something to use when working out – the Plantronics BackBeat FIT. This wireless stereo headphones is lightweight and flexible, so that the earbuds won't fall off easily. It's also waterproof and sweatproof, meaning you can use it in the swimming pool! Using it for a few sessions without charging it is possible, as it has a maximum 8-hours of battery on a full charge. Furthermore, accessing it is made easier with the on-device controls that let you quickly play and pause your music, or pick up incoming calls from your smartphone, all while still running, biking, or whatever you may be doing then. Lastly, the earbuds are designed so that you can always hear your surroundings. Those interested can now grab it in a new vivid red colour!



Zensational Pad

ASUS Zenpad Z370CG by matthew yap

The year of 2015 hasn't been kind to tablets, with the genre long overshadowed by the emergence of phablets. But we continue to see new tablets like the ASUS' Zenpad Z370, which ASUS sent us late in the month. We haven't been able to give it a complete run, but we're going to give you this simple first look on it.

A DASH OF COLOURING

At 7-inches the Zenpad we received was white in colour, and came along with a few coloured back covers from ASUS. The covers are optional, but I can see people who like having some colour on their devices getting one. The cover is made of plastic and has a very rough texture that seems to give it a better grip, something

that's crucial considering the size; you can't quite hold it like a phone, after all.

EVERYTHING YOU'D NEED


One thing the Zenpad has going for it is all-roundedness. ASUS covered all the bases, giving it a 3G SIM and microSD slot on top of the standard cameras and speakers. It's not just 3G for data either, as you can receive or make calls with it, though I've yet to test call quality.

MADE FOR ENTERTAINMENT

At a glance, the screen doesn't look very sharp but that could be due to the resolution only being 1280x800. However, the colours on it look rather vibrant and has high brightness

level. In addition, ASUS implemented useful audio-visual technologies like its in-house VisualMaster and DTS-HD Premium Sound, so I'm expecting this tablet to be great for videos and music.

CRAWLING WITH ZEN

Though it hasn't been with me long, my initial impression when using the device is that it is rather slow. This is despite the 2GB of RAM, which I feel is sufficient. Even if it wasn't, it shouldn't be that sluggish. At the moment, I really can't tell if it's because of the processor (Intel Atom), or the UI been unoptimised for Android Lollipop; it could be both. We'll be testing the Zenpad more thoroughly in the coming weeks, so look out for our full review in the next issue. 





LGM - Large Gaming Machine

Alienware 17 by sia zhen ning

If there was a machine that I've wanted to get my hands on ever since I've started writing for tech, it would be this one. The Alienware series of gaming laptops have always been this Holy Grail of gaming ever since I was still in secondary school, so getting the my hands on one for an extended period of time is much like meeting my childhood hero; except it's a laptop. Seeing as we received the laptop at the tail end of the month though, we'll only be giving you a quick look at the Alienware 17 before we do the full on review next month.

IDENTIFIABLE GAMING OBJECT

One of the identifying markers of an Alienware laptop is the overall design of the laptop. The Alienware 17 is no different as the cover is sloped, metallic and comes with a glowing Alien head, the signature identifier of an Alienware laptop.

The thing is also smaller than I've expected it to be. While it is still a big laptop, it isn't as large as some of the other gaming laptops that we have come through our test lab before.

BLACK SITE

Besides looks, the Alienware 17 packs some very impressive hardware. For the unit that we gleefully received, it comes with a 4th Generation Core i7 processor and an Nvidia GeForce GTX 980M. The powerful components are complemented by the light-show that the keyboard provides, which is customisable on the laptop's own application, of which the name escapes me at the moment.

STEALTH MODE

Using the Alienware 17 immediately after messing around with the Aorus,

the one thing that I notice is how quiet the machine is. The laptop generates minimal noise during gaming, which is a great improvement over the vacuum cleaner that was the Aorus. As for gaming, the Alienware 17 has been chewing up and spitting out quite a few of my games thus far, so I'm looking forward to see what it can do with the other games in my library.

CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE GAMING KIND

From what I've experienced with the Alienware 17 thus far, I'm already in love with it. Check back in our next issue for the full review of the laptop and we'll see if I actually propose to the machine itself. **PC**

Alpha Eight

Samsung GALAXY A8 by matthew yap

After the S6 launch, everybody was eagerly looking forward to the updated version of Samsung's GALAXY Note series of phablets. In the meantime, Samsung has launched the latest iteration in its A-series of mid-range level smartphones. The Samsung A8 is here, and it is aimed to tide you over until the Note 5 comes out.

LOOK PRETTY

If there is one word to describe the A8, it'll have to be S6-ish. There is no denying that when it comes to design, the A8 took some cues from the S6 without the Edge part of the screen. Overall though, it's thinner and slicker. The back of the phone isn't

encased in glass, thus improving the grip of the phone, of which I'm thankful for.

E FOR EVERYONE

There are two configurations when it comes to the A8's innards. The China configuration has the A8 use a Snapdragon 615 while the other configuration uses Samsung's own Exynos processor. For Malaysia, Samsung is going with the Exynos 5430 octa-core chipset. It sports 2GB of RAM and comes with 32GB of onboard memory. The screen on the A8 is, as always, a Super AMOLED display.

SMOOTH SAILING

Within the short amount of time I've spent on the A8 thus far, all I can say

is that the device is responsive and fast. I've had good impressions on almost all Samsung devices that I've used and the A8 is no exception. The phone has decent performance, its screen superb and the cameras are not too shabby either, with the rear camera particularly incredible.

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

While I have yet to take an in-depth look at the A8, I've got to say that I am enjoying the A8. One area of the phone that I'm particularly curious with is its heat management. I'd like to know whether the processor on the A8 generates as much heat as the one on the S6 does. For that, make sure to check out the full review next month. **PC**





- 62 -
SONY C4 DUAL

- 64 -
CANON EOS
7D MARK II

- 66 -
SAMSUNG GALAXY
TAB S2

- 68 -
ACER XR341CK

- 70 -
XIAOMI
MI NOTE

- 72 -
LG CURVED
OLED TV

AWARDS



PLATINUM AWARD

Minimum Score: **9.5**

The best of the best and all wrapped into a neat package.



GOLD AWARD

Minimum Score: **8.5**

Outstanding in performance, features and design.



SILVER AWARD

Minimum Score: **7.5**

Above average but yet still deserve recognition.

EVALUATION

- V Value** | Expensive does not always mean good.
- P Performance** | A measure of how well the product stands up to our testing.
- F Features** | The best gimmicks and flashy parts get the top score.
- D Design** | Aesthetics are important. The nicer it looks, the more points it gets.
- U Usability** | The best for day-to-day tasks are valued higher.

76 APPLE WATCH

Tested

If it explodes, we'll let you know.



62



64



66



The First Taste of Skylake

Asus Z170 Deluxe

RM TBA

by din



Intel has introduced another new processor in the consumer market. Yes folks, the replacement for Haswell/Broadwell is here, and with it comes a new processor pin count (1151 instead of 1150) and a new chipset (Z170 Sunrise Point). This automatically means that the processor needs a new motherboard to be used with. We were fortunate that ASUS sent us their new Z170 based processor, along with the ASUS Z170 Deluxe motherboard to run our review. Want to see how it performs? Lets find out.

WHITE WARRIOR

The ASUS Z170 Deluxe motherboard comes in a full black box that features the motherboard picture on the front. You can also peak inside, as the box comes with a window. Strangely, the box itself is in a static wrap bag, so peeking won't really reveal much.

Underneath the motherboard compartment, A LOT of extra stuffs can be found. There is an easy CPU installation

kit that hopefully will prevent the pins from bending on the motherboard due to clumsy installation. You will also get an M.2 PCIe kit and a U2 converter, a lot of SATA cables, one SLI cable, Driver DVD and the manual to complete the box. Also included is a magnetic antenna for the built in WIFI adapter.

TOTALLY DELUXE

One thing that you would immediately notice on the rear I/O are three teal coloured USB ports. These are not your normal USB ports, but are actually USB 3.1. Yes folks, USB SUPERSPEED+ is now here, and you will get 10Gb/s (theoretical) speed out of it. We tested the port with an external SSD that ASUS has kindly provided us and it was miles faster than anything we've used before. The port is backward compatible so you can still use it with your USB 3.0 and USB 2.0 devices. ASUS has also included a USB 3.0 and a USB 2.0 port for those that do not want to ditch their older devices yet.

Other than that, ASUS has decided to forgo the old D-Sub VGA connector, instead

supplying the board with only a HDMI and a DisplayPort. This will be used in tandem with the Intel HD 530 graphics that is built into the Skylake processors. Three connectors for the high speed WIFI antenna, as well as six analogue audio connectors (Realtek ALC1150 HD Audio) are included. For those that are using two separate networks, two Intel Gigabit LAN interface can be found at the rear as well. The WIFI is one of the fastest onboard 802.11ac wifi we have seen, supporting up to 1300Mbps! Note that you need a router that supports this speed as well to fully benefit from it.

FOURTH VERSION

The Skylake processors comes with support for BOTH DDR3 and DDR4 memory, but that depends on the motherboard. With the ASUS Z170, Asus has decided to go with the newer DDR4 memory modules. It supports up to four banks of DDR4 RAM, with speeds up to 3,466MHz in dual channel mode.

To the left of the RAM slots, the CPU slot is surrounded by a few heatsinks to



provide cooling for the nearby chips and MOSFETS. The heatsinks are not really that large, but do cover three out of four sides of the CPU slots. On another note, it could make it a bit harder to install overly large third party coolers. One great news is how the holes for the cooler are still the same as the old LGA1155/1150 motherboards, so you can reuse your old cooler if you want to.

COOLING LIKE A BOSS

For those that are using water cooling, the ASUS Z170 Deluxe comes with five fan headers, with one of them dedicated to a water pump. The dedicated pump would always be set at full speed, but all of these headers can be configured from within the BIOS or the operating system using ASUS's software. There are also now two USB 3.0 header slots on the motherboard, compared to the single slot that we would see on the previous generation of motherboards. That means you can have an extra four USB 3.0 ports on your computer's front panel.

The motherboard itself is pleasing to look at, mirroring the "Deluxe" name that it's given to. One thing that that we really love is the heatsink for the chipset at the lower right of the board, which has a white LED that pulses when you are using the motherboard. Really cool looking stuff there.

MULTI EVERYTHING

For those that are looking for multi GPU gaming, then you would be

happy with what ASUS has done with the Z170 Deluxe. There are three PCIe X16 GPU slots, but though Skylake and Sunrise Point provides you with more bandwidth lanes, your GPUs will still be limited to either a single X16 or X8/X8 for both AMD's Crossfire and NVIDIA's SLI. Four X1 PCIe slots are also included.

With the added bandwidth, most of the PCIe lanes are no longer shared, so even if you use an M.2 drive directly on the PCI lane, it won't be hampering your GPU's performance. You can either plug in the M.2 directly to the motherboard, located near the Z170 chipset, or you can use the included PCI adapter card. For normal SATA storage, you will have eight SATA 3 6GB/s connectors.

OVERCLOCKING EASE

Overclockers will love the ASUS Z170 motherboard. The boot splash screen will show how many percent the motherboard is overclocked, making it easy to see if there's any prior overclocking without going into the BIOS. Speaking of which, overclocking in the BIOS is a mixed affair. Overclocking using the built in ASUS wizard or the XMP profile is too easy, but using the menu is a tad too specific and confusing to our liking.

Another option is to use the ASUS AI Suite III software to overclock the motherboard from inside your OS. We love

its GUI interface, which looks clean, flat and is easy to use too.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The ASUS Z170 Deluxe is a really great motherboard for a starting point to use the new Intel Skylake processor. We tested the motherboard with an Intel Skylake i5 6600K and it performs well. Hardcore overclockers would love all the settings that they could use on this motherboard, especially when they pair it with a high performance DDR4 memory module. All in all, this is quite the feature laden motherboard. DDR4 support, high speed Wifi, USB3.1. What more you could ask from a motherboard?

SPECS

CHIPSET: Z170

MEMORY: 4 x DIMM, Max. 64GB, DDR4 3733(O.C.)/3600(O.C.)/3466(O.C.)/3400(O.C.)/3333(O.C.)/3300(O.C.)/3200(O.C.)/3000(O.C.)/2800(O.C.)/2666(O.C.)/2400(O.C.)/2133

GRAPHICS: Integrated Graphics Processor- Intel® HD Graphics support

MULTI-VGA OUTPUT SUPPORT: HDMI/ DisplayPort ports

- Supports HDMI with max. resolution 4096 x 2160 @ 24 Hz / 4096 x 2160 @ 60 Hz

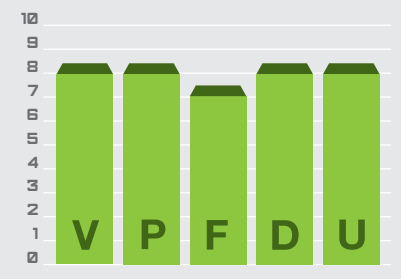
- Supports DisplayPort with max. resolution 4096 x 2304 @ 24 Hz / 4096 x 2304 @ 60 Hz

Expansion: 2 x PCIe 3.0/2.0 x16 (x16 or dual x8) 1 x PCIe 3.0/2.0 x16 (max at x4 mode)

BENCHMARKS

PCMARK SCORES

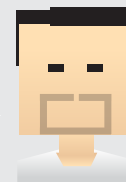
4083 (Home), 4448 (Creative), 3563 (Work)



SCORE
8.0

VERDICT

New toy for those that look to go the way of the Skylake.



din





| TESTED

Designed For Success

ASUS Designo series MX27AQ

RM TBA

by sia zhen ning



We here at PC.com have been getting many monitors as of late. We've experienced curved monitors, widescreen ones and even 4K ones. Fancy as those monitors may be, there are times where all you want is a simple monitor that gets the job done. That's where ASUS's Designo series MX27AQ monitor comes in.

SENSE OF CLASS

In the past 3 months, I've seen a number of monitors from various manufacturers.

Out of all of them, none are quite as good looking as the MX27AQ. From the monitor's body itself to the stand it sits on, this whole monitor looks wildly out of place on my very cluttered desk. I adore the minimal amount of bezel located at the top and sides of the screen, which makes the screen look bigger than it really is.

TILT IT, DON'T PULL IT

One thing to note about the mounting on the MX27AQ is that you can't adjust the height on this monitor. On the plus side, the tilt angle is generous. That said, the

inability to adjust the height on this monitor is a tad bit disappointing.

SLOTS AND BUTTONS

All the expected slots are available at the rear of the monitor. There are 3 HDMI ports with one of them being able to support Mobile High-Definition Link 2.0 (MHL 2.0). There is also a DisplayPort 1.2 port and a 3.5mm headphone jack. At the bottom of the screen, you will find all the buttons that are needed to operate the monitor's menu as well as the power button right beside them.



MAKING NOISE

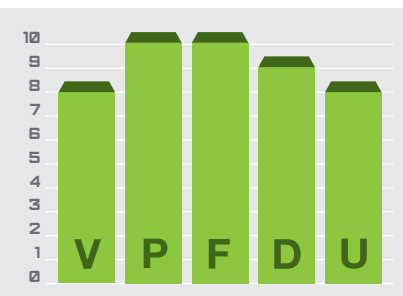
Unusually for a monitor, ASUS has decided to pay special attention to the speakers on the MX27AQ. ASUS has proudly displayed their work on the monitor's speakers by having it state that the audio for this monitor is powered by ICEpower by Bang & Olufsen Technology. Now normally, the speakers on a monitor are, to put it kindly, underwhelming. For the MX27AQ, the speakers are actually pretty good. While it isn't going to be replacing your stand alone speakers any time soon, it does do a decent job at it when you need it to.

WHAT A LOOKER

Simply put, the ASUS Designo series MX27AQ is every bit as attractive as it is impressive. If you want a simple monitor that looks like it came out from a fashion show, the MX27AQ is the perfect fit for you. **PC**

SPECS

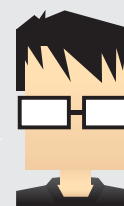
DIMENSIONS 614.4 x 429.5 x 225.4 mm
WEIGHT 5.5 kg
PANEL SIZE Wide Screen 27" 16:9
COLOUR SATURATION 100% (sRGB)
PANEL BACKLIGHT AH-IPS
RESOLUTION 2560 x 1440
RESPONSE TIME 5ms (Grey to Grey)



SCORE
9.0

VERDICT

It looks great, in both senses of the word.



sia zhen ning

Navigating the menu can be confusing the first few times but once you get used to it, you can navigate it rather quickly. One point of complain though, the power button is placed a bit too close to the other buttons for my taste so it is fairly easy to accidentally press it if you're not paying attention.

COLOURS OF THE WIND

Now the important part: performance. I'm happy to say that the MX27AQ is a great monitor. The WQHD display on the MX27AQ uses an IPS panel,

allowing you to view the monitor from different angles without much fuss. Better still, the flicker-free WLED backlighting on the monitor augments the brightness of the screen. Colour fidelity and contrast of the monitor are excellent as well, capable of displaying vivid and accurate colours without any problems, and I didn't even bother configuring the monitor mind you. If you took some time to play with the settings on the monitor, the MX27AQ would be highly impressive.

Selfie Wonder

Sony Xperia C4 Dual

RM1,299

by matthew yap



Timing can be very important in various aspects of life, even when it comes to product launches. In this case, it feels very unusual to have finally gotten down to reviewing the Sony Xperia C4 Dual, especially when the next version has just been launched recently. Regardless, for your frame of reference when we do review the C5 Dual eventually, let's take a look at its predecessor.

A NEW LOOK

When it comes to Sony Xperia devices, the designs are almost always similar. Fortunately, the C4 Dual has enough to

make it different. One thing that you'll immediately notice about this device is its size. At 150.3mm in length, it's larger than even the Z3+, Sony's Xperia flagship. Also, unlike the typical flat back of most Xperia devices, the C4 Dual's back is rounded on the sides for a better grip. Another difference is, rather than separate flaps for the two SIM and microSD, the C4 Dual uses one flap to cover it all. The design looks fine, but the entirely plastic body makes it feel cheap.

GREAT FOR VIDEOS

As expected of an Xperia device, the display is where it does well. Due to the 5.5-inch screen and a 1080p resolution, the C4 Dual

makes for a great portable video player. In fact, with Sony's image enhancement engine, visuals turned out really vibrant. Brightness levels are high too, which helped with the contrast and readability under natural light. The sharpness wasn't quite what I'd call great, but overall I thought that the display performed well. For those who do plan to use it for videos, this smartphone's video app supports AVI, MKV, MP4, WMV and MOV; that's practically most if not all formats.

GOOD AUDIO TO ENTERTAIN

After deciding that the C4 Dual made for a good video player, I had to find out if its



audio was up to par. First thing first, you'll want to get something to elevate it if you plan to play anything on the speakers, as it can be muffled when lying flat on a surface. No distortion at max volume, which wasn't the loudest but the quality was decent. Like most phones, that small speaker isn't going to be able to output much bass, but plug in a headphone and it actually sounds better.

SMOOTH OPERATOR

The Xperia C4 Dual uses an Android Lollipop interface that's quite close to a stock version. It does have its share of tie-in and proprietary apps, but nothing over the top. The great thing is that consumers who have seen or used other Xperia devices will be familiar with the UI, as it is kept consistent. It's unusual to see a MediaTek SoC on a Sony Xperia device, but having used it for some time I find the C4 Dual a responsive device. My swipes register smoothly and there's no useless animation when transitioning.

SELFIE ME THIS

The C4 Dual biggest selling point is casual photography. Not only does it house a 13-megapixel rear camera with autofocus and dual LED flash, its front 5-megapixel camera also has a LED flash so that you can snap selfies even in the dark. To snap a shot, you can use the dedicated shutter button, which has that two-press function you see on actual cameras. There's no beautify mode to enhance your selfies, but it does have a style portrait mode that's gives you a series of filters to spice up the selfies. Overall picture quality was excellent, with great colours and detail, though the auto mode's scene detection feels a bit wonky at times.

NOT ENOUGH POWER

Considering this smartphone's display size and 1080p resolution, the 2600 mAh battery on it made it a little anaemic. I tested it first by watching videos on it with a full charge, managing to get over six hours of video

playback out of it. On my next full charge, I recorded about 17 hours of use. This was when I used it to browse the internet, get on social media, send messages and make calls. That number more or less doubles when stamina mode was used, but it disables WiFi and mobile data while the screen is off, so I tend to keep it off.

WORTHY XPERIA

Overall, Sony has managed to come up with a device that sits not too far below its premium Xperia Z3+ in performance. At a very competitive price of RM1,299, the Xperia C4 Dual is a great choice for those looking for a mid-high tier smartphone. **PC**

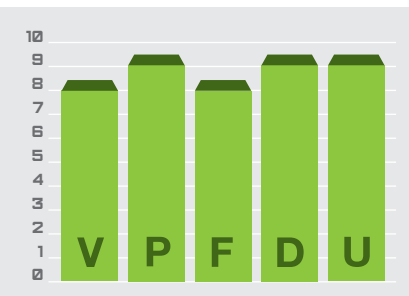


SPECS

DIMENSIONS 150.3 x 77.4 x 7.9 mm
WEIGHT 147g
CHIPSET Mediatek MT6752
CPU Octa-core 1.7 GHz Cortex-A53
GRAPHICS Mali-T760MP2
MEMORY 2GB RAM
DISPLAY IPS LCD, 5.5in, 1080 x 1920 pixels
CAMERA 13MP rear-facing (autofocus, dual-LED flash), 5MP front-facing (LED flash)
STORAGE 16 GB, max 128 GB microSD
OPERATING SYSTEM Android 5.0.2 Lollipop
BATTERY 2600 mAh

BENCHMARKS

ANTUTU BENCHMARK 53122
3DMARK ICE STORM UNLIMITED 19962
3DMARK SLING SHOT 714



SCORE
8.6

VERDICT

An affordable option that performs well.



matthew yap

Sharp Shooter

Canon EOS 7D Mark II

RM6399 [BODY ONLY]

by abby li



It was five years ago when Canon released its EOS 7D and everyone was waiting in anticipation for Canon to launch an upgrade to that, since compared to many other brands, the EOS 7D can be considered quite dated by some. Anyway, let's take a look at what Canon has to offer in terms of upgrade in its EOS 7D Mark II.

ALMOST IDENTICAL

If you are an EOS 7D user, then you will feel like not all that much has changed with the Mark II since they are both very similar in its body shape, size and grip. The Mark II now

sports a larger DOF preview button, and for most part, the button layout remains pretty similar except for a few changes, such as AF area selection button, Menu and Info buttons, magnification buttons and a few other reshuffling of buttons.

BRAND NEW INSIDES

The Mark II is quite an improvement compared to its predecessors – in fact, the difference is quite a gap. The new Mark II now sports a 65-point all-cross-type autofocus system; new shutter mechanism of up to 200,000 cycles; faster burst mode to 10 frames per second, while the 7D was only 8fps; new

150,000-pixel RGB infrared exposure meter; and a new 20.2-megapixel sensor.

FAST FOCUS

Although having the option of recording 1080p videos is a norm these days and even back then with the Canon EOS 7D, the Mark II still wasn't that great especially when it comes to focusing. It is good to see that this problem has been solved with the Mark II's faster autofocus that also applies to video capturing. This is probably due to the Dual Pixel AF the Mark II now sports, making the Mark II a DSLR videographers might think about getting.



VIDEO FRIENDLY

Now, speaking of video shooting, there is one thing that many videographers appreciate found in the EOS 7D Mark II – mic/headphone jacks. You may think this to be a small issue and take it for granted thinking all camera models have this feature, but surprisingly it isn't so. It is really helpful for a videographer, as you can hear what sounds the camera is recording to ensure good quality video and audio. In addition to that, the Mark II also offers full manual control during recording.

SNAPPY CONTROLS

There is one thing I noticed about the Mark II that was not apparent in the EOS 7D. Somehow the buttons, ports and dials feel different, bouncing back as soon as you press on them. I suspect this is due to the additional weather sealing done on the Mark II, as Canon did mention that it improved that quite a fair bit – by as much as four times more. I would've taken it out to test it in the rain, but I don't think Canon would like it very much if I accidentally destroyed a review unit.

STIFF SCREENS


I was actually quite disappointed with the fact that Canon did not think to do something about its LCD screen despite

taking five years to release the Mark II. They could have made an articulating LCD to make shooting at odd angles more conducive, or maybe made the screen touch sensitive.

THAT PERFECT IMAGE

Now for the million dollar question. How is the image quality? In general terms I have to say that the EOS 7D Mark II is really a solid all-rounder, with the ability to capture great quality photos in different conditions. There was very little distortion and the sharpness was stunning. Even at high ISO, the colours were still vibrant and had little noise.

GOOD ENOUGH

After testing the Canon EOS 7D Mark II, I would have to say I was mighty impressed. Despite a few things that irked me and could have been better, I was generally satisfied with the quality of photos, videos and additional features. However, I do have to say that despite that long gap between this and its previous model, the Mark II might not pack as many things as you might hope. In terms of image quality, there is improvement, but not as much as you might expect. I still think it is a worthy new generation that EOS 7D users will appreciate. 



SPECS

DIMENSIONS 148.6 x 112.4 x 78.2 mm

WEIGHT 820 g (Body Only)

LCD MONITOR 3.0-inch TFT colour, liquid-crystal monitor

RECORDING MEDIA CF Cards (Type I); Compatible with UDMA CD cards; SD, SDHC, and SDXC Memory Cards

Image Format: Approx. 22.4 x 15.0 mm (APS-C size)

COMPATIBLE LENSES Canon EF lenses including EF-S lenses

(35mm-equivalent focal length is approx. 1.6x the lens focal length)

LENS MOUNT Canon EF mount

IMAGE SENSOR TYPE High-sensitivity, high-resolution, large single-plate CMOS sensor

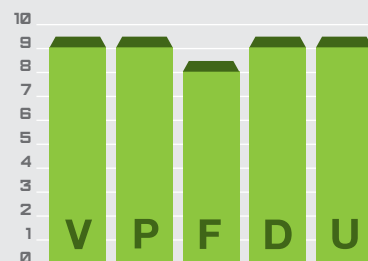
TOTAL PIXELS Approx. 20.9 megapixels

ASPECT RATIO 3:2 (Horizontal: Vertical)

COLOR FILTER SYSTEM RGB primary color filters

RECORDING FORMAT: Design Rule for Camera File System 2.0 and Exif 2.3

Image Format: (Still) JPEG, RAW (14-bit, Canon original), sRAW, mRAW, RAW+JPEG; (Video) MOV (Image data: H.264, Audio: Linear PCM), MP4 (Image data: H.264, Audio: AAC)



SCORE
8.8

VERDICT

A worthy upgrade from the EOS 7D.



abby li





| TESTED

Series Two

Samsung GALAXY Tab S2

RM TBA

by sia zhen ning



In the tech world, there is one constant. If the first iteration of the device is relatively successful, you can expect a follow up to that piece of technology. A little over a year ago, Samsung released the GALAXY Tab S; this year, they're introducing the "new and improved" model of that tablet, the GALAXY Tab S2.

WHITE LADY

As to be expected from the Korean technology giants, the Tab S2 is a great looking tablet. The aluminium banding around the device and the white plastic shell of the Tab S2 gives the whole device a sense

of class. The plastic shell at the back of the tablet is smooth, making it a joy to hold.

BIG MCLARGEHUGE

Samsung's Tab S2 comes in two variations, of which the only thing that differs between them is screen size. There is the 8.4" version, which is of decent size, and then there's the huge 9.7" version. Apart from that, the screens for both utilise the same Super AMOLED screen that is a signature among Samsung products by now.

E FOR ENERGY

Following in the footsteps of the S6 and S6 Edge, the Tab S2 runs on the Exynos

octa-core chip and comes with 3GB of RAM, giving the Tab S2 some real power to play with. Storage space on the Tab S2 isn't anything to write home about since the tablet only comes with 32GB of space, so if you're looking to watch movies on this thing, you might want to get a spare microSD card at the ready.

WORK AND PLAY

During the initial reveal, Samsung pitched the Tab S2 as both a productivity and entertainment machine. This shows as the device comes pre-installed with Microsoft Office by default. Interestingly, the machine does contain iFixit, so if you already have a subscription to that



particular service, you can get right down to video streaming almost immediately.

BRIGHT LIGHTS

Now that we've got the pleasantries out of the way, let's get to the meat of the review. I've experience the Tab S2 in all its 9.7" glory and I've got to say, this isn't exactly the most convenient thing to lug around. However, all that inconvenience means nothing the instant you use it, for 9.7" means serious screen real estate. A big screen, plus the Super AMOLED tech that powers the tablet means that watching movies on this thing is awesome. While the Super AMOLED doesn't really do much in the e-books department, the brightness of the screen does help under glaring light conditions. The camera on the Tab S2 is decent, but if

you're expecting something on the level of the S6, you might be disappointed as the tablet sports a weaker camera than the S6. However, that does not mean that the Tab S2's camera is trash as it is capable of taking pictures of great quality.

MULTITASK WONDER

There is very little to talk about when it comes to performance as the Tab S2 is capable of handling almost anything without breaking a sweat. Game on it? Sure. Work on it? Why not. Play HD movies on it? Barely fazes it. Anything you can throw at the Tab S2, the tablet can do with ease.

LIMITED STAMINA

One drawback that the Tab S2 does have is the battery life. From my experience,

the Tab S2 loses 30% of its battery charge when reading a book for 3 hours with low brightness. Watching movies doesn't make it better as it consumes around 45% of the battery life in a single two-hour film. While the Tab S2's does come with quick charge technology, it is of little comfort when you're using the tablet without any access to a power point nearby.

A TABLET OF MANY PURPOSES

Overall, the Tab S2 is a welcomed iteration of Samsung's Tab S line of tablets. It's thin, powerful, and has a great screen to go with it. While the battery life could do with a little bit of improvement, there's no denying that the Tab S2 is a great device. A word of advice, do try to have a feel for both sizes before getting one. **PC**

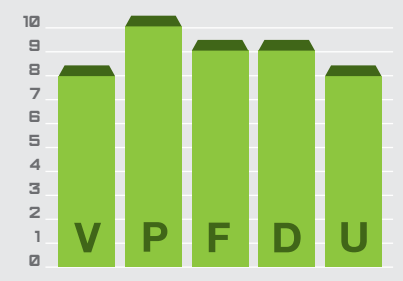


SPECS

DIMENSIONS 237.3 x 169 x 5.6 mm
WEIGHT 369g
CPU EXYNOS 5433
MEMORY 3GB LPDDR3
DISPLAY 9.7" 2048x1536 Super AMOLED
 Camera 8MP Rear Facing, 2.1MP Front Facing
BATTERY 5870mAh
OS Android 5.0 Lollipop

BENCHMARKS

ANTUTU BENCHMARK 53122
3DMARK ICE STORM UNLIMITED 19962
3DMARK SLING SHOT 714

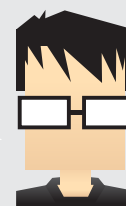


SCORE
8.8

VERDICT

Wonderfully crafted with powerful innards.

sia zhen ning





| TESTED

Just The Right Curve

Acer XR341CK **RM3,699**

by matthew yap

Curved monitors have been coming in one after another, which is great for us since we get to test it first. This time around, we've gotten our hands on the Acer XR341CK that is also a 34-inch 21:9 aspect ratio curved monitor. In this review, I'll mention what Acer has done differently compared to some of the other curved monitors, and how it performs.

BAREBONES

At first glance, the Acer XR341CK looks very bare to me. The stand is made of solid metal for stability, with two thin grey feet flaring out from the 'spine' to form the base, making it look like a bird's skeletal talon. Encasing the stand is a plastic housing that contains the height adjustment mechanism, with an adjustment range of about 10cm. As for the monitor's main body, it's made mostly with plastic, from the tacky looking back cover that seems to be mimicking a pyramid, to the bezels and even the screen. By using plastic for most of the monitor body, Acer was able to keep the XR341CK's weight low.

SCREEN REAL ESTATE

What this monitor lacks in looks, it makes up with functionality. At the back, you'll find a number of USB 3.0 ports and plenty of display outputs (see specs for full list). That means you can connect up to five different devices to the monitor, or daisy chain it with another five monitors for a multiple monitor setup. When it's not on, the monitor looks like it has minimal bezel, but it does in fact have a regular one, just not physical. That's a bit disappointing, because when users inevitably go for that multi-monitor setup, they're going to see a lot of blank spaces in between the screens. Finally, the monitor's main body has a fun gimmick – LED lights at the bottom. You can use the OSD to customise the lights, like giving it that breathing effect. It's good for a light show if you like gaming with the lights off.



LIMITED ADJUSTMENTS

As mentioned earlier, the XR341CK has height adjustment so users won't have to hunch over to see the screen. This helps users maintain good body posture for more comfortable viewing. Besides height, the only other option it has is tilting for a maximum of 35-degrees upward. However, I never tilt my monitors if its height can be modified, so personally I don't see a use for it. There's no swivelling nor pivoting available, since a pivoting a screen of this size won't be feasible (lack of clearance due to height).

WHERE'S THE CURVE?

While called a curved monitor, it can be hard to tell that the Acer XR341CK is one at all, even when seen up close. The model's curve is so subtle that I almost thought it was a regular flat screen, but when you look at it from the side you'll know for sure it is in fact curved. I believe that its degree of curve contoured to my eye's natural viewing angle (or maybe it's because I wear glasses), making me think it's flat; an interesting phenomena if nothing else.

FOR GAMERS

Though the monitor has this weird issue where the extreme edges distort slightly –




due to the screen itself or the viewing angle at the time, I'm not sure – but overall I was satisfied with its performance.

Targeted at gamers, this monitor is great for games. It not only has a high refresh rate (75Hz), but also has very high resolution, so you can enjoy games in greater detail. Also, it has FreeSync, which prevents tearing and lowers input lag, very useful if you run multiple monitors. Lastly, there's profiled OSD settings so you can switch around. You can have one profile with blue-light filter and lowered brightness for reading (affects refresh rate), then hit a single button to turn into game mode so that you get the full 75Hz back. This

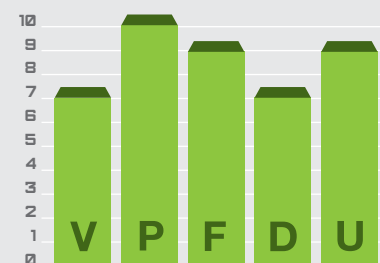
can be handy for those who want to use it for general browsing or reading as well.

GREAT OPTION FOR NOW

Acer has done well with its version of curved monitor. While it may not be the crazy, above 100 Hz monitors that many gamers deem the best, it's still great for games and even consoles since it has a set of built-in speakers and 3.5mm audio jack if you prefer headphones. When you consider its price of RM 3,699, slightly cheaper compared to other curved monitors, the Acer XR341CK might not be a bad option at all. 

SPECS

SCREEN SIZE 34-inch
TYPE In-Plane Switching
NATIVE RESOLUTION 3440 x 1440
ASPECT RATIO 21:9
BRIGHTNESS 300 cd/m²
CONTRAST RATIO 100 million : 1 (Dynamic Contrast)
RESPONSE TIME 4ms
REFRESH RATE 75Hz
PORTS 4x USB 3.0, 1x USB 3.0 Hub, 1x audio jack, 2x HDMI, 2x DisplayPort, 1x Mini DisplayPort, 1x DC output, 1x Kensington lock



SCORE
8.4

VERDICT

Looks tacky and has some issues, but performs admirably overall.



matthew yap



| TESTED

Better Late Than Never

Xiaomi Mi Note **RM1,549**

by sia zhen ning



It took half a year for the Mi Note to arrive in Malaysia. In the time it took for Xiaomi's flagship-level smartphone to appear here, many other companies have released their own flagship smartphones in Malaysia, each of them with components that are slightly more up to date than what the Mi Note is offering. Old though it may be, you shouldn't write off the Mi Note just yet, as it can still perform well.

GLASS CASE

Confession time: I'm actually quite smitten by the full white unibody of the Mi Note. It gives the smartphone a touch of class when compared to the other phones that Xiaomi

has released over the years. The entire body of the phone, front and back, is encased in a layer of Gorilla Glass, giving the phone a smooth feel that I am comfortable with. Does the glass on the Mi Note make it a fingerprint magnet? Most likely, but thanks to the white shell of the phone, I can barely even see it. The same cannot be said of the black coloured version of the phone however. An aluminium band runs through the top to bottom of the phone, giving it that premium look everyone is looking for.

A STEP BEHIND

Hardware is where the Mi Note feels a step behind because, again, we here in Malaysia only just received the Mi Note.

This doesn't mean that the Mi Note is obsolete, however, as the internals of the phone is still respectable. Boasting a Snapdragon 801 and 3GB of RAM, the Mi Note still packs some decent power. One part that falls short on the Mi Note is the lack of support for microSD cards, meaning the phone will only ever have a maximum of either 32GB or 64GB of storage space.

I-UI

User interface is also a part where the Mi Note falls behind, as the phone runs Android KitKat with the MiUI 6 skin. That's not to say that an old UI is a dealbreaker since MiUI 6 is still a decent skin for Android. That said, seeing as MiUI 7 is about to be



released to the public (or has already been released by the time you read this), there may be hope that the phone would get an update to its user interface.

NEW TRICKS

Old UI aside, the Mi Note does sport a few new tricks up its sleeve. One new feature that should be familiar to those who have used phablets before is the "One-hand Mode". This mode shrinks down the windows of open apps from the standard 5.7" to 3", 4" or 4.5", allowing you to control it with a single hand. The other feature that I liked? Read mode, which basically reduces blue light to make the phone be easier on your eyes.

AUDIO VISUAL READY

During the reveal of the Mi Note, the one part that Xiaomi boasted about is the camera. The phone comes with a 13MP rear camera using a Sony CMOS sensor

and optical image stabilization. This allows pictures taken on the phone to be clear and crisp, even in lowlight conditions. The part Xiaomi was boasting about? The rear camera does not jut out like it does on the iPhone 6, making the back of the phone almost perfectly smooth. Another pleasant surprise on the Mi Note is the presence of an audio chip that gives the phone its own digital-to-analog converter. This gives the Mi Note a bit of an edge in the audio department when compared to other phones out in the market.

HEAT BRINGER

What do all flagship phones have in common? Why, heat issues of course. The Mi Note, like any other flagship phone, has a tendency to get hot really fast. If you toggle the Mi Note to performance mode, you can actually feel the temperature of the phone slowly rising. If you, like me, use the Mi Note as a GPS as well, be prepared to have your phone restart

occasionally as the heat generated can be quite severe at times.

STILL RELEVANT

Late though it may be to arrive in Malaysia, the Mi Note is still a great phone to own if you're not after the most cutting edge in mobile technology. Of course, there is no denying that the Mi Note is an old model, and one with a steep price tag. If you don't mind the age and the asking price of the Mi Note though, it would make a great phone. For everyone else, you should probably look around and consider other options before setting your sights on it. **PC**

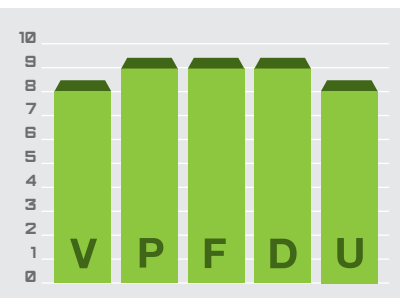


SPECS

DIMENSIONS 155.1 x 77.6 x 7 mm
WEIGHT 161g
CHIPSET Qualcomm Snapdragon 801
CPU Quad-core 2.5GHz Krait 400
GRAPHICS Adreno 330
MEMORY 3GB RAM
DISPLAY 5.7" IPS LCD capacitive touchscreen, 1080x1920
CAMERA 13MP optical image stabilization, autofocus, dual-LED (dual tone) flash rear camera, 4MP 1080p front camera
STORAGE 16/64GB
OPERATING SYSTEM 4.4.4 KitKat
BATTERY 2200 mAh

BENCHMARKS

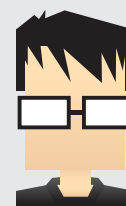
ANTUTU BENCHMARK 39362
3DMARK ICE STORM Maxed Out
3DMARK ICE STORM EXTREME Maxed Out
3DMARK ICE STORM UNLIMITED 16761



SCORE
8.6

VERDICT

Dated, but still highly functional.



sia zhen ning



| TESTED

Perfect Contrast

LG 55EC930T Curved OLED TV ▶ RM10,999

by matthew yap



We tech enthusiasts like to cover many and various things, but there are some that we really don't encounter much of, like televisions. TVs are something we don't get much chances to review and to be fair, aren't products that people consider buying regularly. However, because an individual might only think of getting a new one every few years, it's probably even more important

that we review TVs so that consumers can make informed decisions. Of course, when LG asked if we'd like to review one of their newer models we jumped at the chance. Here's what we thought of LG's latest Curved OLED (Organic Light Emitting Diode) TV.

DISPLAY OF BEAUTY

As it was an on-site review, there's no box to unwrap so we're not exactly sure of what else is inside besides

the TV. The most important piece is the TV itself, and wow it is a work of art. Model name EC930T is a slim TV with a subtle curve. How slim is it? As slim as a pencil, LG says. My rough estimate is that it's less than 1cm in thickness. It gives a real sense of class and elegance, definitely the kind of premium home entertainment that'll turn heads when you have visitors in your home.



THAT BEZEL!

Besides the slimness, what people would notice immediately is the flimsy looking stand. It's not very solid and that can be a concern, so my personal recommendation for this TV is that it should be wall or rack mounted for greater stability. Leaving the issue on the stand behind, I looked at the bezel and everything was forgiven (or more like forgotten, actually). At less than an inch on all four sides, the EC930T has one of the thinnest if not THE thinnest bezels I've ever seen. I'm not exaggerating either, as the display's size is 54.6-inches diagonally, just shy of that actual size of the entire TV frame at 55-inch. Imagine daisy-chaining a few units together for an enlarged display, it would look nigh-seamless!

MAGNIFICENT VISUALS

Now that I've finished gushing over the physical aspects of the TV, let's discuss its performance. The one thing that really sticks out for OLED TVs in general, is how amazing the contrast can be. It's something that no other form of backlight-based display can emulate. On the EC930T, the black is truly black instead of light shades of grey, making dark areas or scenes that much more obvious and detailed. This is because in OLED displays, each pixel generates its

own light; read up more on that if you're curious. Next is colour, which is also an area that OLED displays excel in. I tried checking with the LG reps about the total colour gamut of the model, but they couldn't give me the answer. Suffice to say, the colour is amazingly vibrant.

AUDIO BELOW PAR

TVs aren't complete without good audio, so that's another area I also looked into. This TV has Harmon Kardon speakers built into it, so I had some expectations for its performance. Unfortunately, when it comes to speakers the quality can often be determined by the physical size of the drivers, and because the EC930T is such a thin display, its sound is also on the thin side. The volume is decent and it certainly doesn't sound bad, but it falls flat and there's not enough boom to it, so it's probably best to pair this TV up with a more capable sound system.

NEW OS

Like many of LG's newer models, the EC930T recently got the upgrade to WebOS 2.0. This version has a user-friendly setup wizard that's great for the not so tech-savvy people. The UI is pretty easy to use and functions smoothly, but due to the lack of internet connection at the time of reviewing, I couldn't fully test how well apps like the built-in web

browser performs. For reference though, the remote that comes with the TV has a mic that you can use for voice search, so that can be a very useful feature.

LOWERING OF COSTS

The jury is still out on whether curved displays actually have any major impact on visual depth or ergonomics. Regardless, LG makes a compelling case with its OLED TVs. Once, these were so expensive that not many could buy them. They still are, but we're starting to see prices coming down and soon it may be in a range that's affordable. But if money is no object and the best is your demand, then maybe now is the time to get a LG 55EC930T Curved OLED TV. **PC**

SPECS

DIMENSIONS (W X H X D) 1,225 x 753 x 204 mm (with stand)

WEIGHT 16.4kg (with stand)

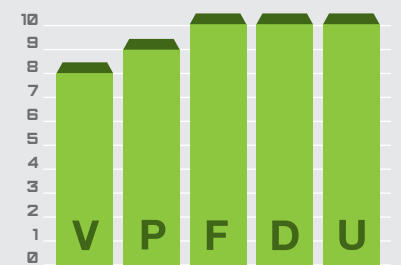
DISPLAY 55-inch 1080p Curved OLED Panel

ENGINE Triple XD Engine

SPEAKERS 2x 10W Stereo with SRS TruSurround HD and Bass Enhancer

SMART FEATURES USB Video Player, Photo Viewer, Music Player, Photo Frame Mode, Alarm Timer (Sleep), Wireless LAN, Web Browser, Video Streaming App, SNS (Facebook/Twitter via AQUOS.NET), MHL, Optical Picture Control, Active Backlight

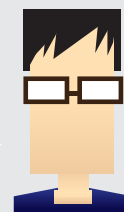
I/O 3x USB 2.0, 1x headphone out, 4x HDMI, 1x RS-232C, 1x CI slot, RF in, 1x Full Sert, 1x Composite in, 1x Component in, 1x Digital audio out, 1x Ethernet LAN



SCORE
9.4

VERDICT

This OLED TV is what you want if visual quality is your number one priority.



matthew yap





| TESTED

Tri-Power

Sapphire R9 390X Tri-X

RM1,839

by din



While all the spotlight is on the latest AMD Fury line of graphic cards, AMD has also updated a bunch of their other cards to cater to the much more demanding mid to upper-midrange market. This includes revamping their existing cards, namely the Hawaii chipset to get more out of them. Paired with the released of Microsoft's latest OS, Windows 10, it should squeeze out more performance out of a reliable baseline. One of the refreshed GPU is the R9 390X. Rated just below the Fury range of graphic card, would this card prove you can still teach an old dog new tricks? Let's find out.

CHROMA ORANGE

The R9 390X that we have received is from Sapphire, one of the more well known

third party manufacturer that has always produced AMD's products. The box is rather large, and its chrome orange scheme would certainly turn a few heads.

The packaging for Sapphire graphics cards hasn't changed much over the years, so the Tri-X 390X's box isn't any different. You will be greeted by a rather unassuming cardboard box, which in turn contains the graphic card tightly packed in a foam enclosure, as well as another cardboard box with a driver dvd, a Sapphire sticker, a quick user guide manual, and a 1.8m HDMI cable inside.

TRIFECTA

Taking the Sapphire R9 390X out of its bubble wrap haven, one would immediately notice its rather heavy weight. Indeed, this card is tall and heavy. It looks great though,

with its fully black shroud and minimal chrome orange details. The Tri-X from its name refers to the three very large fans on the card that help dissipate heat faster, while making sure that the card itself remains quiet.

The aluminium heatsink donates to the bulk of the weight and juts out about 10cm longer than the PCB itself. Sapphire's heatsink and cooling combo is one of the best on the market for AMD third party cards, and it shows here. The card itself feels rather sturdy, even when you are holding it by the shroud, which usually flexes on any other card. The only thing we feel lacking is an aluminium backplate, something of a norm for a card of this weight and stature. Maybe Sapphire feels that the card is tough enough not to bend, but it does rather take away from the whole premium feel.

CROSSING THE STREAM

The Sapphire AMD R9 390X Tri-X is based on the Hawaii XT R9 290X, so you should see some similar specs. It's based on the 28nm process and has a 250W TDP. Sapphire states that the card is overclocked out of the box, and it does run at 1,005 Mhz, instead of the reference 1,000 Mhz speed; to be honest, we expected a much higher overclock speed here. It has 64 ROPs and the memory is clocked at 1,500Mhz (6Gbps effective), higher than the 5Gbps on the R9 290X.

One of the most apparent upgrade of the R9 390X, compared to the R9 290X, is the inclusion of 8GB of GDDR5 VRAM. Not surprising, especially with 4K resolution gaming on the rise and 4K resolution monitors getting cheaper. It's also not surprising to see that the R9 390X Tri-X needs two 4-pin GPU power connectors to work. As with all newer AMD model, there is no crossfire pin for multi GPU setup anymore.

4K ON HDMI? NOPE!

On the rear of the card, the Sapphire R9 390X Tri-X features a single DVI-Dual Link connector, three DisplayPort 1.2a and a single HDMI 1.4a connector. Note that HDMI 1.4a does not support 4K over HDMI at 60Hz, meaning that you won't really want to do gaming over HDMI, unless you are happy to be playing at low refresh rates. It's an ironic thing, considering that the card IS targeted for 4K gaming and for most people 60FPS and 60Hz is the bare minimum.

The three DisplayPort connectors meanwhile meant that you can configure three monitors for AMD eyefinity surround. You can even daisy chain three more for six monitors. The Sapphire R9 390X Tri-X also support AMD's freesync, which when used with the appropriate monitor will sync the monitor's refresh rate with the game's frame rate. No more screen tearing, or having to turn on VSYNC and experience sluggishness.

TESTING AND THOUGHTS

We tested the Sapphire R9 390X Tri-X and we were really blown away by its performance. Most of the games were set on High/Extreme graphics, and we are happy to report that we could play those games at a high framerate (>60FPS) constantly at full HD resolution. We tried to overclock the card with MSI afterburner and managed a stable clock of only a tad over 1,100Mhz, which is quite disappointing considering that it has a good cooling and needed only two 4-pin power connectors. But even at stock, it's still one beast of a card.

If you are looking for a new powerful card, and the Fury is out of your reach, well then you might want to give the Sapphire R9 390X Tri-X a try. It's fast, it's cool, and it also supports the new Directx12 that comes with Windows 10. It should be a blast.



SPECS

CHIP AMD RADEON R9 390X
VRAM GDDR5 8GB
CLOCKSPEED 1,005 Mhz
MEMORY CLOCKSPEED 6,000 MHz
OUTPUT DVI x1, HDMI x1, DP x3

BENCHMARKS

3D MARK FIRE STRIKE EXTREME 5326



SCORE
8.2

VERDICT

Can't wait to get me a 4K monitor to pair with this



din



Jewellery for Techies

Apple Watch Sport

RM1,515

by abby li

Yes, the much raved-about Apple Watch that had quite a cult following with – as usual – two very different opinions from two different ends of the spectrum. After taking it for a bout of testing with many different apps and situations, there are a few things I've discovered that makes the Apple Watch different from other wearables. Just to mention, the edition we got was the Sports edition that comes with a rubbery watch band for a more active lifestyle.

SMOOTH SAILING

Despite not being someone from the "Apple is God-sent" camp, I have to say that the Apple Watch is really well made. The touchscreen works very well and swiping around screens is absolutely smooth; there is no lag, nothing freezes and no in-between screens if you didn't swipe hard enough to go to the next screen. I've tested a number of smartwatches, but so far, nothing gives that feeling of fluidness the way the Apple Watch does.

ALWAYS CONNECTED

Another great point about the Apple Watch that many smartwatches tend to fail at is connectivity between the watch and phone. With this watch, I did not experience a single dropped connection and every notification comes at almost the same time as my iPhone.

MINI PHONE

Having an Apple Watch is similar to having a little phone strapped on your wrist. You can read emails, talk to Siri



when you feel lonely, and even like an Instagram photo using your watch. So, this is more than just a notification device.

ICON HEAVY

When it comes to Apple devices, I realise that most of them tend to use icons more than anything else, and although it looks great, especially in the Apple watch since you can actually zoom in and out using the digital crown, the problem is that it is confusing. Sure, some may say that it isn't very hard to remember the icons and its corresponding app, but can you actually say you remember every single one of them? Another problem is the way the Apple Watch works with iOS. If the app you have installed in your phone does have a watch version, the app icon gets automatically placed into your stash. Eventually, there is so many that you tend to find it hard to

find your favourite apps, or even recognise which icon belongs to which app.

HIDDEN FACES


Another issue I had with the Apple Watch is not major but more than a little annoying; the watch face is very limited. There are only a handful of watch faces, and most of them are pretty boring. Having something personal like a watch and still not able to have more faces is like being stuck with a pair of sport shoes when you need to be in black tie. I've actually checked a few friends who have an Apple Watch and all of them are using the most interesting watch face – the face with Mickey Mouse.

DEAD BEFORE YOU KNOW IT

In this day and age with the insane number of devices that needs to be charged, I am

always looking for ones that can hold a charge longer to prolong charging frequency. Well, the Apple Watch is not one of them since the battery can only last a little more than a day. On top of that, the charger is pretty cumbersome with a ridiculously long cord.

NICE BUT...

Owning an Apple Watch is nice and is quite a convenient thing to have, but I have to say with it being so expensive, the urge to own one has sort of flown out the window. It is more of a status symbol than something that makes your life so much more convenient; something like a jewellery of sorts. So unless you really love the design of the Apple Watch, then you might want to wait a little to see if Apple does something better in the future. 



SPECS

DIMENSIONS 38.6 x 33.3 x 10.5mm

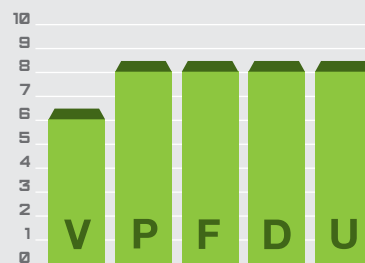
WEIGHT 25g (Case); 37g (Band)

Display: Retina display with Force Touch

SENSORS Heart rate sensor, accelerometer, gyroscope, ambient light sensor

CONNECTIVITY Wi-Fi (802.11b/g/n 2.4GHz); Bluetooth 4.0

WATER RATING: IPX7



SCORE
7.6

VERDICT

Nice to use but could use more improvements.



abby li



| TESTED



Disco Key Lights

Razer Blackwidow Chroma **RM719**

by matthew yap

Peripheral brand Razer has been going on a crazy bling-bling spree this year, giving their popular models the colour treatment. Here's another one for those looking for a new gaming keyboard – the Razer Blackwidow Chroma.

BLACK IS STILL COOL

The Blackwidow Chroma comes in a mostly black box with points about its features. Inside is the keyboard with its long cable and two USB plugs used to power it, but no wrist rest. The entire thing is black with a design and key layout that is very neat. However, I was annoyed that Razer put the function key next to the right-Alt key, as it made it very difficult to make use of the multimedia buttons.

SATISFYING CLACKING

The Blackwidow Chroma gets Razer's new type of mechanical switch, which has a tactile feel close to that of Cherry MX Blue switches. It's a very good keyboard for typing work or gaming, but the keys are a bit on the stiff side. Those who prefer tap-typing might not find it to their liking, though I feel that it just boils

down to personal style and preference; I had no issues with it.

SYNAPSES FIRING

When it comes to Razer's gaming keyboard, you will have to use the Razer Synapse software. With it you can configure the backlighting, set shortcuts and macros, or even record your keystrokes. Trying to record macros turned out to be an annoying affair, as it wasn't very flexible. After pressing "Record", in between keystrokes the delay recorded is either a fixed preset, or you could time the delay yourself. A default preset doesn't work when varied delay between different keys is needed, while timing it yourself can be tricky to get right.

YOUR MILEAGE MAY VARY

No doubt, the Razer Blackwidow Chroma performs excellently and the chromatic backlighting adds a degree of fun to it, especially for those who game in the dark. However, there's one huge obstacle for the average Malaysian when it comes to this keyboard – price! At RM719, only the most ardent of Razer fans would plonk down the cash for it. **PC**

SPECS

DIMENSIONS Watch face: 20.88 x 24.36mm; Straps: 139.7-160mm (small), 160-198.1mm (large), 198.1-226mm (x-large)

DISPLAY Touch screen, Monochrome LCD, Backlight for low visibility

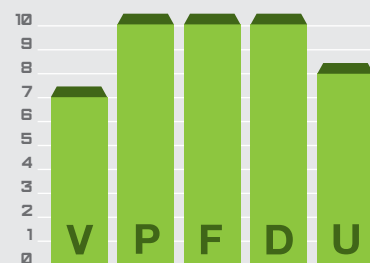
SENSORS GPS, 3-axis accelerometers, 3-axis gyroscope, digital compass, optical heart rate monitor, altimeter, ambient light sensor, vibration motor

BATTERY Lithium-polymer; Up to 7 days

CHARGE TIME 1-2 hours

RADIO RECEIVER Bluetooth 4.0

WATER RESISTANCE 5 ATM



SCORE
9.0

VERDICT

Great in almost every way, except for the price and macro recording.



matthew yap



INTELLIGENT TIMEPIECES

A look at smartwatches PC.com has reviewed

by matthew yap

Before 2015 started, some of us predicted that this year would be the year of smart wearables. While it hasn't exactly take off in a way that would qualify as such, more and more wearables have appeared throughout the year. Smart wearables aren't entirely uncommon now, especially with so many people using fitness bands. However, this article will be looking at smartwatches specifically. More than just a watch, a smartwatch is a smart wearable that also doubles as a computerised electronic gadget. A few things that are possible with smartwatches are retrieving notifications from our mobiles, take calls, and a variety of other features.

In this month's device showdown, I'll discuss the smartwatches PC.com has managed to review in the last year or so, and explain on how they perform in the areas listed below:

FEATURES

No fancy talk here. I start off by listing down the smartwatch's features.

DESIGN

It's a watch after all and watches should have style. Here I pay attention to the looks of the watches.

ERGONOMICS

Watches should fit well and a smartwatch is not exempted from this rule. For this area, I consider the fitting of a watch and discuss whether it fits all wrists.

USABILITY

A smartwatch can tell more than just time and should have many other functions, thus user experience becomes important to factor in. With regular use, I'll be able to gauge a smartwatch's user-friendliness.

BATTERY LIFE

Most smartwatches are known for poor battery life. Here, I look at how long a model can last on a full charge.







Apple Watch

We're starting in alphabetical order, so that means the Apple Watch Sport goes first. Launched in April this year, the Apple Watch is certain to have made Apple fanboys drooling. It's also the most expensive option right now at approximately RM1,479, no thanks to the US dollar exchange rate, and the only way to get one at the moment is from independent sellers that import them in limited quantities.

FEATURES

Like all smartwatches, the Apple Watch comes with a host of apps that make it tick (pun unintended!), except with iOS as the platform. It enables functions that are normally available only on an iPhone, such as map navigation, making or answering calls with it, or tracking daily exercise goals. There's a lot more that it can do besides that, such as secure payment using Apple Pay, though that isn't widely accessible here yet.

DESIGN

Those looking for a classy design will have to look elsewhere, as the Apple Watch Sport is designed to look more like a sports watch, hence the name. Made with a custom alloy of stainless steel and aluminium, the body of the the Apple Watch is a classy silver colour. It comes in a variety of coloured bands (the one we reviewed was white), which is what gives it that casual, sports watch look. On the right side of the watch face are two buttons. Then there's the Sport Band, which is made of a soft, flexible material called fluoroelastomer (basically a kind of synthetic rubber) that can either be white, blue, pink, green, or black. We had a white one to review and I must say that white is definitely the colour that suits it best.

ERGONOMICS

Unlike the standard edition's metal bracelet, the Sport edition's synthetic rubber strap may not be anywhere near as sophisticated or stylish, but definitely earns points on comfort. At 42mm, the body of the watch is not too bulky nor heavy, so I can wear it all day long and not feel uncomfortable. However, the clasp mechanism was a little loose and felt like it can drop easily.

USABILITY

While operating the watch, I found that it responded smoothly. However, when I need to use apps that require it to interface with the phone, it tends to be noticeably slower. A feature I liked was how the clock only appears when the watch is raised to about chest height, making it so that the backlight doesn't have to be always-on. I also really liked the Digital Crown, an input button that works like a mouse's scroll-wheel. As for the other button, it brings up a list of most contacted people, allowing me to quickly call or send a message. Overall, thanks to intuitive user interface, I found the Apple Watch a pleasure to use, even if it's not the most feature rich.

BATTERY LIFE

Frequent travellers who own the Apple Watch Sport will have to pack an extra charger on trips, because it won't be able to last the trip. Apple rates the smartwatch at 48 hours battery life if it is used as only a timekeeping device or to retrieve notifications. Of course, when other functions talk time and health tracking is added into the picture, the battery drain is faster. So depending on usage, it can sometimes have around 50% (light use for the day) at the end of the day, meaning it can still last maybe half a day, or below 10% which then means it has to be charged overnight.



Asus ZenWatch 2

The next two are both Android-based smartwatches, starting with Asus' own ZenWatch 2. The Asus ZenWatch 2 launched in Malaysia not long ago and comes into the market with a very compelling price point of RM649, making it the cheapest option of the bunch. For those who are looking to get a smartwatch, it is an affordable option.

FEATURES

Besides the obvious ability to keep time, the ZenWatch 2 lets you take calls and receive notifications from your smartphone. It can also remotely control your smartphone's camera to better compose and snap your photos. Of course, as an ASUS device it can work with ZenUI's apps like "Do It Later", and has the expected (and highly popular in Malaysia) ability of fitness tracking.

DESIGN

The ZenWatch 2 has a simple yet classy design that will appeal to many, with a stainless steel top and bottom casing that's rounded at the edges. A bronze/copper coloured body separates the two. As for the strap, a genuine leather strap is used and comes in three different colours. Want a different look? Asus also made it possible to easily replace the stock strap - can be done using the quick release mechanism - with any 22mm strap of your choice. A very nice touch! However, the bezel around the screen detracts it from being better overall, as there's less space because of it. Hopefully it's removed or minimised in future versions of the ZenWatch 2.

USABILITY

To enable the ZenWatch 2's full range of features, a bunch of apps have to be installed to a smartphone first. This ended up being a cluttered mess (on my phone), especially since it doesn't have an app drawer for hiding less used apps. Don't get me wrong, they are useful when used with the watch, but I did wish that it wouldn't clutter my phone so, since it is also an important aspect of the user experience. Also, the on/off button's position on the right-side of the back cover, plus its relative size, makes it very hard to press or access quickly. Other than the above, the ZenWatch 2 was a pleasure to use and didn't freeze or drop connections while in use.

ERGONOMICS

I feel that the ZenWatch is somewhere in the middle in terms of fitting. It's not too chunky, which makes it fit well for both ladies and gents. However, it can look a little too big on people with dainty wrists. Wearing it for long durations isn't a problem and the strap didn't chafe most of the time when using it on a normal work day. Now that doesn't mean I would sleep with it on, because its bulk doesn't make it the best sleeping companion. Quite a shame, considering that it invalidates the point of having sleep tracking available.

BATTERY LIFE

Battery life can be an issue on the ZenWatch 2, as it doesn't last very long. With normal use such as checking for notifications and using it as a regular watch, the ZenWatch 2 goes dry in about two days. That's actually not entirely bad, since it can be timed (geddit?) to last through a day and then be left to charge overnight. However, if I keep the backlight always-on or use it heavily, it tends to drain very fast. Once, it lasted only about a day after intense use and that can be a problem if I don't have the charger, or a convenient place to charge it.







Garmin vivoactive

Next up on our list is a brand you probably didn't expect to have a smartwatch: Garmin. Long known as the company that makes GPS devices, Garmin has been branching out and making other types of devices, such as the Garmin vivoactive GPS smartwatch. This smartwatch can be pricey at RM1,099, but comes with a host of interesting features made better with the built-in GPS.

FEATURES

This particular smartwatch is almost like a buffed up version of a fitness band. While it does offer the usual smartwatch functions like notifications and call answering, it's mostly geared towards sports and fitness tracking. By using GPS and other internal sensors, it's able to get accurate readings on things like distance travelled, calorie count, or even swimming pace.

DESIGN

The Garmin vivoactive's squarish design can leave people divided. Some would call it sporty, but it could also look very basic to others. Since it's made for people who love outdoors activities, I think Garmin was spot on with the sport watch-esque design. Its rubber strap can be replaced with other coloured bands, or even a leather one, offering some choices which is nice. But otherwise you can't just use any standard bands that can be found in watch shop. Like a lot of smartwatches, the vivoactive also has a small screen, with the bezel hogging a lot of space. Overall, I believe that the vivoactive's design would appeal to a younger crowd.

ERGONOMICS

Relatively slim, the vivoactive is another smartwatch that fits great. Not only that, it is very light weight and the strap won't irritate the skin easily, so I can wear it to sleep comfortably without feeling itchy, or have it dig into my wrist constantly. The strap is also quite secure and since it's also waterproofed, I can take it for a swim and it wouldn't fall off in the process. Not that I could swim, but I tested it in a pool nevertheless!

USABILITY

As mentioned, the vivoactive is made for outdoor junkies. To start tracking stats, I had to install the Garmin Connect app first, which is compatible with both iOS and Android. It takes awhile to get used to all the menus, but once I did it was easy enough to use. A handy feature the watch has is that it can emit gentle buzzes whenever I've been lazing on the couch too long, so that I'll get up and exercise a bit. As for issues with the device, it would be how frequently it arbitrarily disconnects and would require the app or even phone to be restarted. This means that stats tracked might not be 100% accurate all times.

BATTERY LIFE

From last month's review of the vivoactive, you probably remember that battery life is one of its biggest win. Unlike many smartwatches, the Garmin vivoactive can last a good while on a full charge. Garmin's website reports 3 weeks, but in practice it seems to last around 10-14 days on a full charge, less if I use it heavily. A big contributing factor is probably the backlight, or the lack of it being always-on. To get it to light up, I actually have to press a button; it's kind of like one of those G-Shock sport watches. Of course, the screen being relatively small, not very vibrant, and mostly displaying in black and white, also contribute much to its longevity.



Samsung Gear S

The last one on the list of smartwatches we've reviewed before is Samsung's Gear S. We all know Samsung has always been interested in expanding its portfolio of smart devices, so it should come as no surprise when it launched its own smartwatch. Priced also at RM1,099, this slick looking watch's claim to fame is a veritable stable of features that are normally found on a phone.

FEATURES

Samsung's Gear S is probably one of the most unique smartwatches on the market. Not only can it be used as a regular electronics watch, it's also essentially a mini smartphone. Yes, the Gear S packs 3G (uses nano SIM), WiFi, Bluetooth and GPS support, all inside its small frame. In other words, it can make calls, send messages, track fitness statistics, and more.

DESIGN

The Samsung Gear S has an elegant curved screen that looks great, but also happens to be the bulkiest of the lot due to the nano SIM slot. It's a lovely watch, with its glass screen and metal frame, combined with a design that would charm gadget geeks. The strap here is proprietary and can be outfitted with other Gear S compatible coloured straps. What I liked was the screen size, one of the largest for smartwatches, showing you a pretty watch face and a few other basic info at the same time. Bezels are still there, but it is smaller in terms of ratio-to-device size.

ERGONOMICS

As to be expected, the bulk of the Gear S could make it uncomfortable for some people. It might chafe for people with thicker wrists and those with dainty ones might find that it looks absolutely ridiculous when they wear it. My wrists are pretty thin, but even it felt pretty awkward for me to wear for long hours. However, it fit me well enough and many people should be able to wear it comfortably, thanks to the slightly curved back of the smartwatch. The strap is semi-stretchable and has a nice rubbery texture, but it's proprietary so if you are hoping to exchange it for a classier strap, then you're out of luck.

USABILITY

I really like being able to make or take calls on the Gear S, though only privately since it's like using my smartphone in speaker mode. It's able to pick up my voice well enough as long as it's within a distance of 1 metre, which makes it great while driving. However, texting on it wasn't practical at all, despite the relatively larger screen; it's still only about 2 inches plus, after all. As for using it in general, I didn't find any issues with lag or slow downs. However, since it's running on Samsung's own proprietary Tizen OS, the Gear S' can't be used on non-Samsung phones so some of you might consider it a deal breaker.

BATTERY LIFE

Having all that extra functionality and the AMOLED screen has impacted the Gear S' battery life. From my time using the device, it normally lasts for about two days on a full charge. However, that's when it is used as a watch and to receive notifications from a smartphone. Plug a nano SIM in to use the 3G capabilities, plus using the navigation app "HERE for Gear" or making phone calls regularly, and you will see the battery drain in about a day and a half. If used extensively, I have to charge it once a day.




Conclusion

In this year where the Internet of Things is so widely discussed, the emergence and evolution of smartwatches is certainly interesting to observe. However, it does make the brand neutral hope that standards could be laid out. It's plain to see in this review alone that while there are some common grounds,

smartwatches can differ widely from each other. Of course, that does offer consumers a variety of unique choices. But I'm asked to pick one out of the many as the one I believe to be the best, so while you readers might not agree with me, here's the smartwatch I'd pick if I could afford it.

Apple Watch Sport

It was pretty hard to pick a winner out of this, but ultimately I picked the one that gave me the least amount of issues and that is the Apple Watch Sport. An intuitive user interface, relatively fluid performance, and combined with a good looking timepiece, makes this the best option of the lot. If you don't mind the not so stellar battery life and the hefty price tag, this smartwatch is an option to seriously consider. 



PLAZA LOW YAT

THE LOWYAT INCIDENT

PC.com takes a look at what transpired in Lowyat and the dangers of social media.

by sia zhen ning

If you've been paying attention to the news recently, you've probably heard about that whole Lowyat Plaza incident. It started off with a viral video being shared on Facebook, and was eventually spun into a fracas that involved racism, dishonesty, politics and violence. When the dust settled, some members from certain political parties decided to use the incident to demand for more regulations on social media. Seeing as social media is yet again in the news, we here at PC.com decided to take a look at the more...unglamorous side of social media.



WE'RE CONNECTED

Social media wasn't always the juggernaut it is today, of course. The growth and prevalence of social media is directly linked to the increase in internet penetration. This increase in internet users means that more people would be exposed to social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter. In Malaysia, the amount of people that rely on social media is huge. According to a research, there are roughly 10 million people visiting Facebook every day since the second quarter of 2014, while there are also roughly 3.4 million Twitter accounts that are registered to Malaysia. Suffice to say, Malaysians are quite the consumer of social networking services.

SPREADING THE WORD

These days, social networking services have become something more than just a way to make new friends; it has become a place where information and news are shared among the public. Today, you can use social media to spread information about something that not many people may be aware of. One of the more commonly cited scenarios, where social media played a big part in the unfolding of events is, of course, the Arab Spring incident where people living in the Middle East were doing live updates on what was happening during that time period. For examples that are a bit closer to home, you just need to recall some of the videos that went viral, such as the one video with the road bully which resulted in real world consequences, with the bully being widely condemned by the general public.





NOT EVERYTHING IS RAINBOW AND BUTTERFLIES

While there is no denying that social media is highly important these days, it should be noted that social media isn't exactly at fault. At the end of the day, those who use social media are humans and humans aren't perfect. The internet is available to a significant chunk of the population these days and that means there are various characters from all walks of life actively using it, and some of these people aren't exactly role models. For every kind, open-minded person on social media, there is a close-minded bigot. Meeting one of these unpleasant folk isn't a matter of IF, but rather a matter of WHEN.

A CASE TURNED UGLY

In the case of the incident that happened in Lowyat Plaza, the best and worst of social media were available for all to see. What turned out to be a simple act of thievery (according to the police) was blown so far out of proportion that it became a matter of racism, misinformation and violence. It all started when the video of the thief, who was caught and handled roughly, went viral on social networking sites. From that point forwards, the story somehow managed to be spun into a racial issue, giving this incident a very dangerous dimension. This whole fracas culminated with a group of hooligans deciding to take matters into their own hands by starting a brawl around the area, because apparently as we all know, the only way to right a wrong is to use violence.

ONE STORY, TWO SIDES

There are people who claim that you can't trust traditional media these days as they are frequently modified to suit an agenda of an interested party, whoever it may be. The Lowyat Plaza incident proves that this is also the case when it comes to social media. As the video itself didn't provide enough background to clarify what actually occurred, some opportunistic parties decided to take the chance to embellish the story. The video eventually went viral on Facebook, but it was presented in two different lights. To some, it was a case of a man being swindled out of a handphone; to others, it was simple, straightforward theft.

GOING DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

A few minutes after the video went viral, certain Facebook pages started popping up, advising people to boycott stores run by the Chinese due to their "dishonest" nature. Alongside the boycotts, there were pages who urged the community to show



Photo credit : www.themalaysianinsider.com



their displeasure by gathering in front of Lowyat Plaza in a show of solidarity. Going by the amount of people commenting on the pages themselves, as well as the angry mob standing outside of Lowyat Plaza, it's fair to say that the message managed to reach quite a number of people. Things went ugly a little later though, when the angry mob turn into a riot and became violent, resulting in the police deploying its riot squad to contain the situation.

NOISE DICTATES

What occurred in Lowyat Plaza is a single event out of many others that proves that social media can be used for nefarious purposes, just as well as it can be used for good. You can tell a semi-believable lie on social media and chances are good that somebody will believe it. This means that it is very easy to mislead people. Couple with the fact that some people are just gullible enough to believe everything they read on social media and you'll have quite a problem on your hands.



LIE WITH A PURPOSE

The Lowyat Incident also proves that spinning a story to suit your agenda happens on social media just as frequently as traditional media does. Social media has proven to be the perfect platform to voice your views on a certain topic regardless of your knowledge of the topic. Social networking services tend to have a user count in the millions and as such, it isn't too hard to find a small group of people that agree with your viewpoint. With the knowledge that there are people that agree with their viewpoints, these individuals would continue to voice their own opinions, regardless of whether or not they hurt the sensitivities of others in the first place.

SILENCE THEM?

It isn't too far of a stretch to say that the event that occurred in Lowyat Plaza was one of the most serious incidents that happened so far this year. This outburst of violence has caused the authorities to contemplate regulating social media as a whole. The idea to regulate social media isn't a new one, it has been on the table since the Bersih rally came into existence. However, the incident has galvanised the authorities to find a solution in order to prevent this from ever happening again. Recent news reports indicate that the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) is planning to engage social media platform providers to help them regulate social media, as a countermeasure against future incidents.



Low Yat Plaza incident a criminal act of shoplifting

James Sivalingam | July 13, 2015

MPs deplore attempts in the social media to portray a simple case of theft as a racial incident to divert public attention from pressing national issues



KUALA LUMPUR: Several MPs have pointed out that a recent alleged shoplifting case which occurred at the Low Yat Plaza in the tourism belt in the Federal capital, a stone's throw from the Central Business District, was a criminal act and has nothing to do with race or any other factor.



Aspen: Hajib won't last long

Bersih abusing church's hospitality?

Passage centre has list of immigration Dept car numbers

Action against undergrads who take part in Bersih rally

Swiss and Saudis dragged into SHDB scandal

New gov't based on 'endless possibilities' mantra

When life gives you lemons

Ubah dasar atau kami sokong pembangkang - Orang Asli




Photo credit : www.nst.com.my.com

WHO WILL GUARD THE GUARDS?

Arguments can be made on whether or not social media should or should not be regulated. The frequently quoted argument for regulation of social media is that it would force users to be more responsible for whatever they post on social networking services. After all, people would refrain from posting up half-truths or outright lies if there are consequences for doing so. On the other hand, can we trust the government to not be heavy handed in the regulation of social media? From my own personal point of view, the ability to regulate social media is a dangerous one as the possibility of power abuse is too high to consider.

STOP AND CONSIDER

For those who believe that social media is a much more trustworthy source for news and information, the events that happened at Lowyat Plaza proves that social media is equally susceptible to the problems traditional media faces. The prevalence of social media also means that misinformation will quite possibly spread faster than the truth. Therefore, be certain of what you share and believe on the internet. After all, people do in fact lie on the internet. 



Windows 10 101

Some tips, tricks, and tweaks

by matthew yap

With Windows 10 out for over a month, more and more people have begun upgrading and using it permanently. But like any new OS, there's a degree of learning curve to it, as well as some known issues. In this article, we've included some tips or interesting things about new OS that we've compiled from the internet.

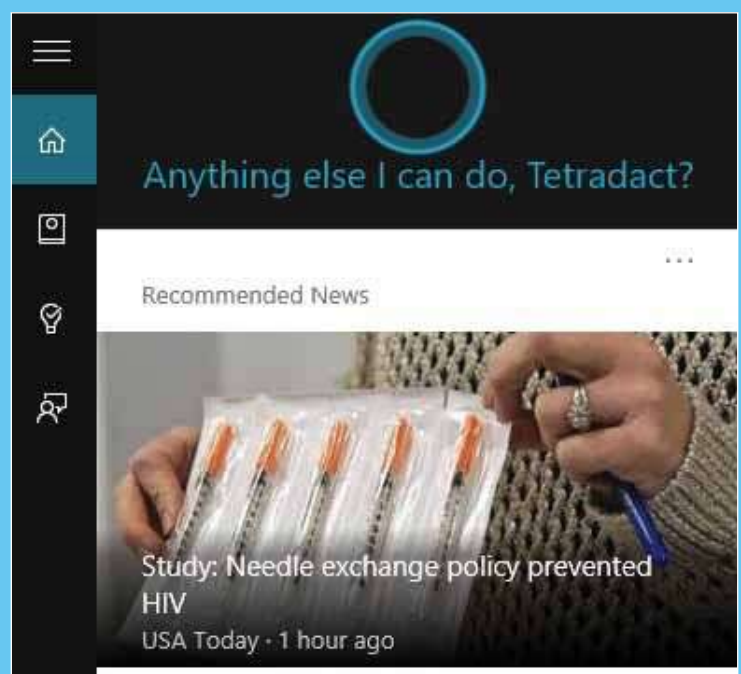
CUSTOMISE THE START MENU

We mentioned that about the return of the Start Menu in our Tech101 last issue, but obviously Microsoft would improve it for its return. Using the tiles design from Windows mobile and Windows 8, the new OS allows users to decide what tiles go on the Start menu, as well as the position and size of it. If you're an alien and liked the Windows 8 Start screen, you can re-enable that too.



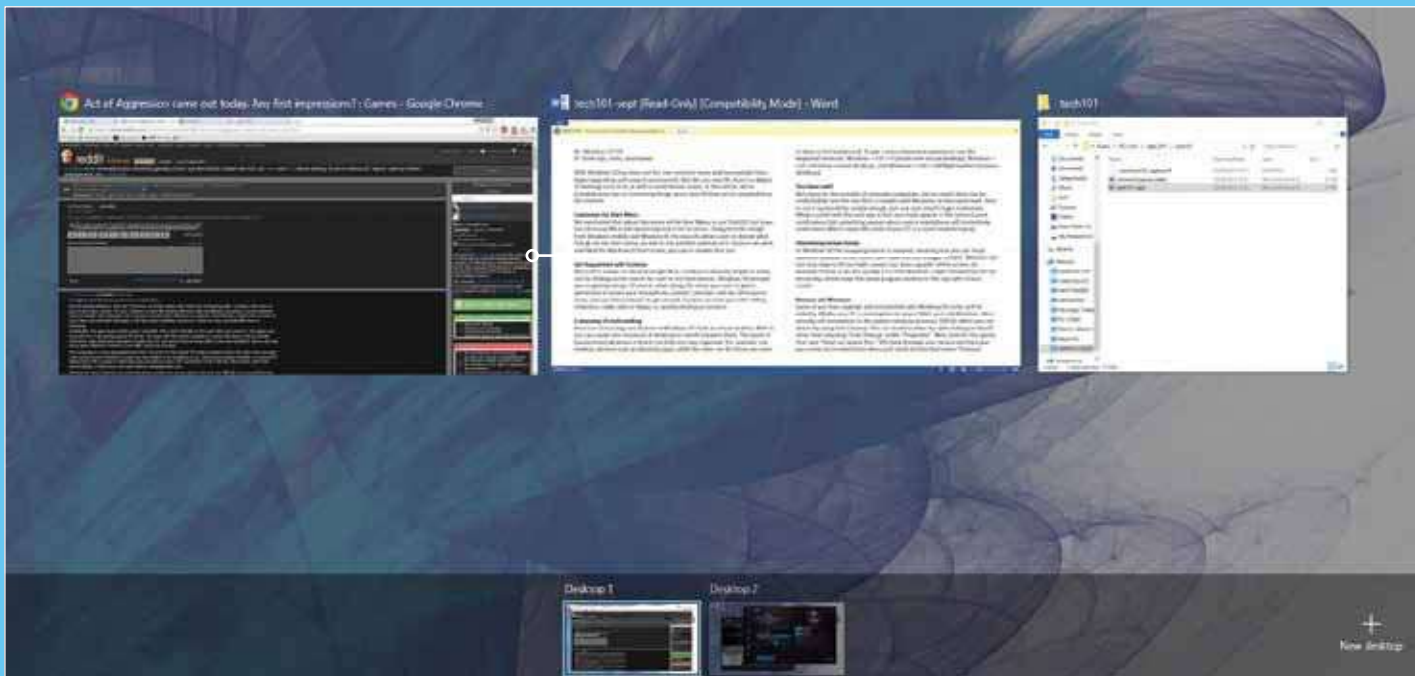
GET ACQUAINTED WITH CORTANA

Microsoft's answer to Siri and Google Now, Cortana is relatively simple to setup. Just by clicking on the search bar next to the Start button, Windows 10 prompts you on getting set up. Of course, when doing the setup you have to give it permission to access your microphone, contact, calendar, and etc. Once you're done, just say "Hey Cortana" to get started. Cortana can help you with setting reminders, make calls on Skype, or quickly check your location.



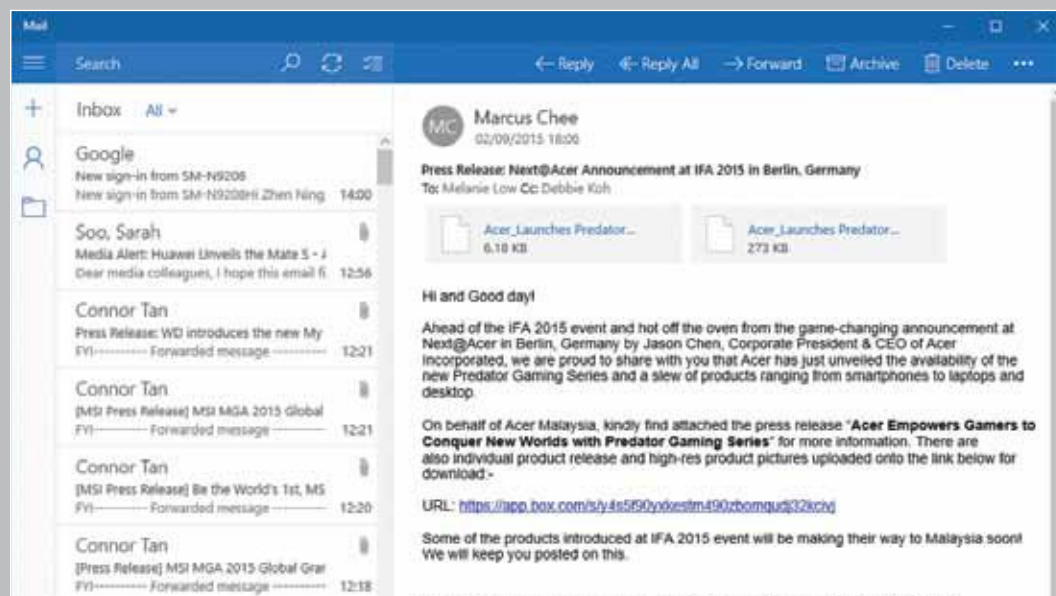
A NEW WAY OF MULTI-TASKING

Here's an interesting new feature in Windows 10: built-in virtual desktop. With it, you can create new instances of desktops or switch between them. The point of having virtual desktops is that it can help you stay organised. For example, one desktop can have your productivity apps, while the other is for those you want to keep in the background. To get a more responsive experience, use the keyboard shortcuts: Windows + Ctrl + D (create new virtual desktop), Windows + Ctrl + F4 (close current desktop), and Windows + Ctrl + Left/Right (switch between desktops).



YOU HAVE MAIL!

Not many do this outside of corporate companies, but an email client can be really helpful and the one that's included with Windows 10 does quite well. How to set it up should be simple enough, just use your email's login credentials. What's useful with the mail app is that new mails appear in the Action Center notifications list, something anyone who's used a smartphone will instinctively understand. Mail is especially useful if your PC is a touch-enabled laptop.





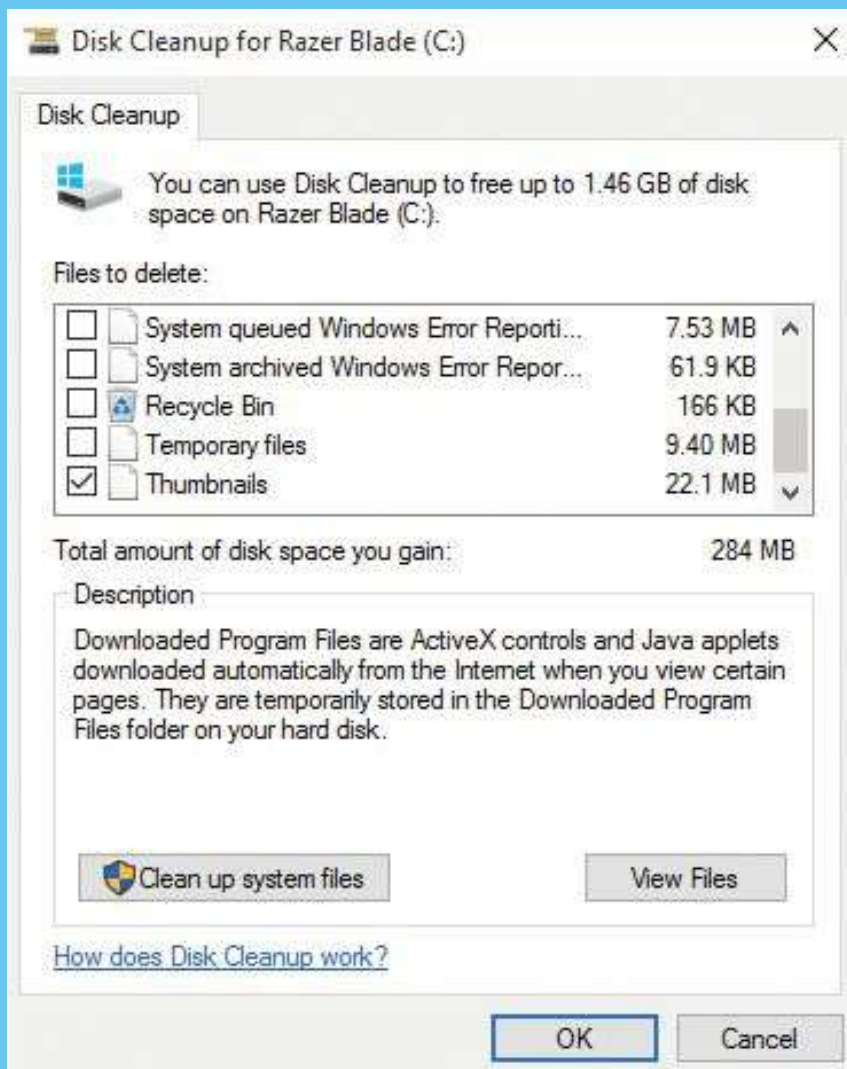
MAXIMISING SCREEN ESTATE

In Windows 10 the snapping feature is retained, meaning that you can 'snap' different windows to the screen and make full use of bigger screens. Now you can not only snap to fill out half a screen, but also a quarter of the screen. An example of how to do this quickly is to hold Windows + Right followed by the Up Arrow key, which snaps the active program window to the top-right of your screen.



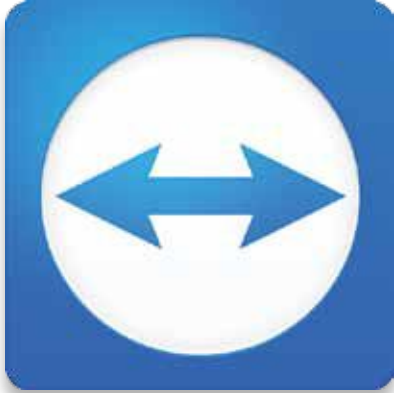
REMOVE OLD WINDOWS

Some of you have upgraded and are satisfied with Windows 10 so far and its stability. Maybe your PC is running low on space? Well, your old Windows 7/8 is actually still somewhere in the system taking up precious 101010, which you can delete by using Disk Cleanup. This can be done either by right-clicking on the OS drive, then selecting "Disk Cleanup" under "Properties". Next, look for the option that says "Clean up system files." It'll check through your system and then give you a new list to select from. Here, just check the box that states "Previous Windows installations", then click OK to delete it. **PC**



Featured Apps

Team PC's Favourite Apps of the Month



TEAMVIEWER | FREE

Ever had family call you for tech support in the middle of the day, and home is far away? For those of you who have to play family techie, check out TeamViewer. This app provides you with an easy and secure way to remotely access Windows, Mac and Linux systems. Once you have access, you can use it to troubleshoot some computer problems (OS has to be working though) without needing to be on-site.

ZOMBIES, RUN! | IN-APP PURCHASES

Sometimes the best way to exercise is to make your goals into a game, that's where "Zombies, Run!" comes into the picture. Use this app while you're out for a jog, or practicing for a run, then listen to the 'mission'. During missions, you would be prompted to speed up when 'zombies' are chasing you, and while running you'll pick up various supplies for your game; really cool stuff.



PUSHBULLET | FREE

With our daily lives becoming more integrated with technology, we also wish for more integration of our devices. Well, then you need Pushbullet. This is an app that let's you connect your phone to a PC, making it possible to send text message and get notifications on your computer, or send links and files from your PC to your phone or other contacts.



TASKER | RM13.42

Need help keeping yourself organised? Well, here's another productivity app to help you get going. Tasker is a paid app that performs tasks for you based on user-defined context, such as time or location. It can change your phone audio automatically to silent mode when it's night time, track your phone's location in case of theft, and more.

That Weekend's Other Big Gathering

Team PC visits AniMangaki 2015

by rul mk

August was indeed a very generous month for ACG related events, one of which happened to be the AniMangaki 2015 that was held at Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre on 22-23 of August. An annual convention and now running on its seventh year, con-goers consider AniMangaki as the next big event before December's Comic Fiesta.

This year's convention saw no shortage of attendance by ACG enthusiasts and cosplayers of both local and international origin. Con-goers are welcomed by

AniMangaki's vast amount of doujinshi (fan-made merchandise) vendors, activities, competitions, performances and exhibitions across the convention area. Notable attractions include several fighting game booths welcoming any self-proclaimed champions who happened to pass by, the Touhou Matsuri exhibition with activities and panels for fans, the AniMangaki Idol singing competition, and the toys exhibition with various collectibles ranging from Macross, Transformers, DC Comics and so on.





Other fan favourite arrangements during the convention were the Q&A and autograph sessions with YAKI, a celebrity cosplayer from China - who is known for her historic and oriental cosplays, and also the stage rocking band performance from special guest, Zwei - who are well known for the theme songs of shows such as ROBOTIC;NOTES and others.

Aside from the attractions, the crowd flow and helpful staff has been great for AniMangaki 2015. There were some minor complaints to address, but nothing major to stop the convention from being one of Malaysia's favourite ACG events to attend. Looking forward to what they have in store for next year.. PC



V For Victorious

Visual Arts Expo 2015 post-event report

by sia zhen ning


On the 22nd and the 23rd of August, the Malaysia International Exhibition & Convention Centre at the Mines hosted hundreds of Japanese pop culture fans as the place held the first ever Visual Arts Expo (VAX). Over the weekend, attendees were treated to various events such as show screenings and talks given by special guests that came all the way from Japan.

The event was graced with the presence of two highly successful animation studios from Japan: Studio Gainax and Studio Satelight. The former studio is responsible for the Evangelion series, Tenga Toppa Gurren Lagaan, Panty and Stocking, and etc. While the other, Satelight, is the studio behind the famed Macross series. The big names for both studios include Studio Gainax's CEO and Co-Founder Hiroyuki Yamaga, as well as the legendary Macross designer Shoji Kawamori. Tsukuyomi: Moon Phase creator, Keitaro Arima, was also among the guests that showed up

at the Visual Arts Expo. Throughout the weekend, all three men were busy giving talks on stage, reviewing the portfolios of aspiring Malaysians and signing autographs for their legions of fans.



On Sunday, a live concert was held to bring the event to a close. The performers - LadyBeard, Aimee Blackschleger and Back-On - took the stage to rapturous applause. After a long night of activities, the event officially ended at 10.30pm with many attendees screaming for an encore.

While the event was met with some minor hiccups here and there, the overall execution of the event was a smooth one. As to whether it will be held again next year, the organisers of the event has promised that the Visual Arts Expo is here to stay. 





True Blue Singer

PC.com interviews Aimee Blackschleger

by sia zhen ning

If you've heard an anime theme that was done in English, chances are good that the singer responsible for it goes by the name of Aimee Blackschleger. Hailing from America, this English vocalist has contributed to various video games and anime in recent years. We at PC.com managed to get an interview with her during the recently held Visual Arts Expo to ask her more about her career.

PC.com: Can you introduce yourself to those that who are not familiar as to who you are?

Aimee: My name is Aimee Blackschleger. I'm originally from the United States, but I've been living in Japan for a while. This is my first time in Malaysia and it is a pleasure to meet you guys.

PC.com: So when did you start getting into music?

Aimee: As a child, I liked to sing. Professionally, I started singing 20 years ago and it was mainly in Japan. My career started when I was doing small music events here and there. It was back then that I recorded a commercial for a shampoo. From there, I started getting a lot of requests as a session singer; that's my job in Japan, I'm a session singer. I think first people hear my songs, then they ask "who's that?", which will then lead them to calling me.

PC.com: You have a history of working with DJ TAKA in a trance album. How was the experience like?

Aimee: It was fun, and he's a really nice guy. I actually did a few songs for him when they built the new Konami studio, becoming the first person to sing in there so that was pretty cool. The studio used to be outside of Tokyo, but then they moved it into Tokyo. He is really easy to work with

too. If the melody is too difficult, he'll say "you can change it if you want". For DJ TAKA's songs, I got to write the lyrics too so that was good for me; I could create something that was easy to sing.

PC.com: Was it hard to adapt to Japan as an individual and as a singer who was not originally from there?

Aimee: When I was a child I used to travel a lot, so coming to a new country is not that difficult. I think the hardest thing to understand, of course, is the way the people communicate. I had to learn and watch, because the Japanese people are very polite and they don't voice out when something is bothering them. So you have to kind of be able to feel when somebody's angry or something is not right. The food is good though. I love food, so food is good everywhere, even Malaysian food is really nice. Overall, I would say that it wasn't so bad adjusting to Japan.

PC.com: Of all the songs you've sung throughout your career, which is your favourite song out of all of them?

Aimee: My favourite song – because I love the melody so much – is Release My Soul from Guilty Crown. It was so beautiful and... yeah, the melody of the song is my favourite.

PC.com: Seeing as you've contributed music to various different forms of media like anime, games and such, is there a difference performing from one media to another?

Aimee: Not a huge difference, because I get the music and I learn the song, or sometimes I write the lyrics. Though I didn't write the lyrics to Sawano's songs. I think, when it comes to recording, it's all the same, you have a job and you do your best. It's all interesting and exciting.

PC.com: You mentioned that Release My Soul is your favourite song. How do you feel about the song? Is it very personal?

Aimee: When I write music, it's kind of more personal. If something sad happens, I write a song that's more emotional. So I like that song because it was quite sad. I think it's a part in the animation where somebody passes away, so I think it was a touching moment in the story. That song was quite emotional, it touched me and many other people.

PC.com: Do you watch any anime? And if you do, do you have any favourite anime?

Aimee: This may sound funny, but I don't really watch much TV or listen to music much, because I like to kind of concentrate

on the music and my own....heart? If I watch too many things, I would get influenced by that. However, I do admire animation. I like art and I think it's cool, but I don't watch many of them.

PC.com : How about animes that you've contributed to.

Aimee: I've watched a bit of Shingeki (Attack on Titan), but it was quite intense for me. I would say that I mainly concentrate on the music.

PC.com: You've worked with guys like Hiroyuki Sawano and others. Do you have any other artistes or composers that you enjoyed working with?

Aimee: I've mentioned DJ TAKA from Konami, then there is another guy called Sota Fujimori who works for Konami too. Sawano, for some reason, calls me back to sing his songs a lot. I think I've worked with him the most, and on some other songs for Gainax. I would probably say that I know Sawano best, but everyone I've worked with in Japan was nice.

PC.com : Speaking of Konami, you have worked with Hiroshi Okubo of Bandai Namco for Ridge Racer. How was it to work with Mr Okubo?

Aimee: He's very nice, but the composers are really serious. We're in the booth and he's at the table going "sing that again", or "do that again". We don't sit around and have coffee or anything, we're not friends; it's more of a business thing. He was nice enough though, and it was fun working with him.

PC.com : Your current song from Aldnoah.Zero, how do you feel about that song and did you have any contribution to the music?

Aimee: No, I did not write those lyrics unfortunately. I was just hired to sing the song, but I like the melody a lot though; it's a bit crazy, it goes up and down, so it's hard to sing. We always tease Sawano-san because he isn't a singer, but a pianist and a composer. So we always tell him that "we're going to take you to karaoke and make you sing your own song", because Mika Kobayashi and myself both feel that the song is hard. But he does try to find your voice range in order to make a song that will fit you, so I think he tries.

PC.com : Are there any differences between recording in a booth, as compared to performing live in front of a crowd?

Aimee: Oh, of course. If you make a mistake in the booth, it's okay as you can have

multiple takes. If you're on stage and you make a mistake, or your voice gets stuck or something like that, it's embarrassing. I feel a lot more nervous when I'm on stage, but it is something you have to prepare for. It's like being an actor, you have to just focus on the performance. We did an animation event at the Nippon Budokan, where there were 25,000 people. This was for a Shingeki no Kyojin live reading and music event, so they had all the voice actors from the animation reading the script. There were flying titans everywhere and I had to perform for all those people. I was really nervous, but you just got to do it.

PC.com : Expanding on that, do you have any other great experiences you've encountered throughout your career.

Aimee: For me, what makes something great is the people. It doesn't matter if it is a big place or a small place, if everyone is friendly, it makes a big difference.

PC.com : Do you have any funny experiences?

Aimee: Back at the Budokan, they told me that my performance will be the finale, so there's going to be some fireworks, but we can't rehearse it because it would be too expensive, so there might be a little noise, but prepare yourself. As I'm walking on the stage for the real thing and suddenly, boom! It was so loud that I jumped for real. If you looked it up on Youtube, you can hear that the first note was a bit shaky and I had to concentrate to come back, because my heart was beating so fast. I think it is a shame that we can't practice any fireworks, but yeah it was really expensive. I think I might have tripped or something, but I don't think anyone saw that. Apart from that, everyone is funny when we are working backstage since everyone is pretty friendly.

PC.com : Beyond your work in the anime scene, you're also in the J-Pop scene with your band, Harp and Soul. Tell us a bit about your band.

Aimee: My band is not only focused on J-Pop, but we also do a few bilingual songs. The harpist is classically-trained and we have percussions and guitars, but our sound is a bit more modern pop, R&B style. In order to get people or a crowd, we do a few covers of our favourite songs and also write our own songs. We've sang at a few outdoor festivals and we've travelled to Berlin and Barcelona for different music conferences and things like that, so the band is kind of a personal hobby and project. For the Pop thing, I've done a few backup vocals for AKB48's new album, and I got to be on TV with a Japanese girl named Ai who does Pop, Reggae and R&B. As a backup vocalist, I've worked with a few famous Pop

artistes in Japan, but I think my style isn't Pop, it's more R&B.

PC.com : Do you have any advice for budding artistes who are looking to have a career in Japan?

Aimee: I think they should just try a lot of different things. For me, if someone offers me a job, I just take it. I don't think about too much about whether or not the pay is good because once people hear you, then lots of other people will hear you and they'll want to ask you to do stuff for them. I think that's how I got started; I just say yes to everybody who asks me. Sometimes the budget is not so good and sometimes the budget is really good, but if you're only thinking about the money, you'll can't really get ahead.

PC.com: Given the chance, would you like to have a career in the United States?

Aimee: Maybe, but right now I live in Japan, so I haven't really thought of crossing over. It's harder there, so much more competition plus I like working behind the scenes, like session stuff, and I never really wanted to be super famous or something like that. It's possible and it'll be fun to go over there to start something, but for now I'm in Japan. **PC**





- 106 -

GAMESCON
RUNDOWN

- 110 -

GAMETIME
NEWS

- 112 -

HYPERDEVOTION NOIRE

- 114 -

FINAL FANTASY X
& X-2 HD

- 118 -

FATE
GRAND/ORDER

- 121 -

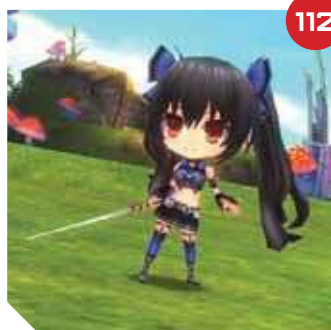
FALLOUT SHELTER



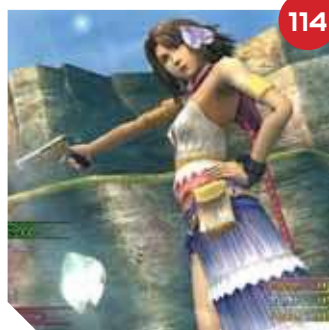
116 EVERYBODY'S GONE
TO THE RAPTURE

GameTime

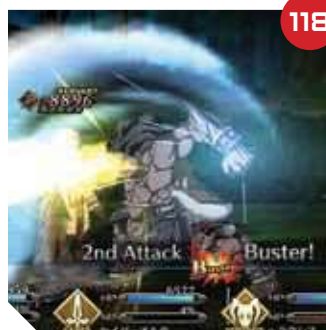
This is where the fun begins



112



114



118



121



Gamescom Rundown

PC.com takes a look at the highlights for Gamescom

Germany played host to the second biggest gaming convention, as Gamescom took place during August. While the event didn't have as many new reveals as E3 does, Gamescom did have a few new games announcement, as well as a more in depth look at some of the games revealed at E3. Without further ado, let's go through some of the highlights for the event.



MICROSOFT REVEALS

Microsoft has big plans for their console, the Xbox One, and it showed in Gamescom. During the event, they showed Crackdown 3 and Halo Wars 2, which are sequels to games that originated on the Xbox 360.

Crackdown 3 seems to be particularly interesting, as the multiplayer will feature 100% DESTRUCTIBLE ENVIRONMENTS, all thanks to Microsoft Cloud.

Quantum Break has also received a gameplay trailer, revealing the highly fascinating time manipulation mechanic that will be present in the third person shooter.

Hideki Kamiya was also present at Microsoft's press conference as the legendary (and some say, infamous) game designer shows off Platinum Game's dragon infested RPG, Scalebound.

Finally, there's From Software with Dark Souls 3. Judging from the gameplay trailer, it seems that Dark Souls 3 will be taking some cues from Bloodborne, as the combat seems to be faster than what the Dark Souls series is known for.

Suffice to say, the Xbox One is looking good on the gaming side of things.



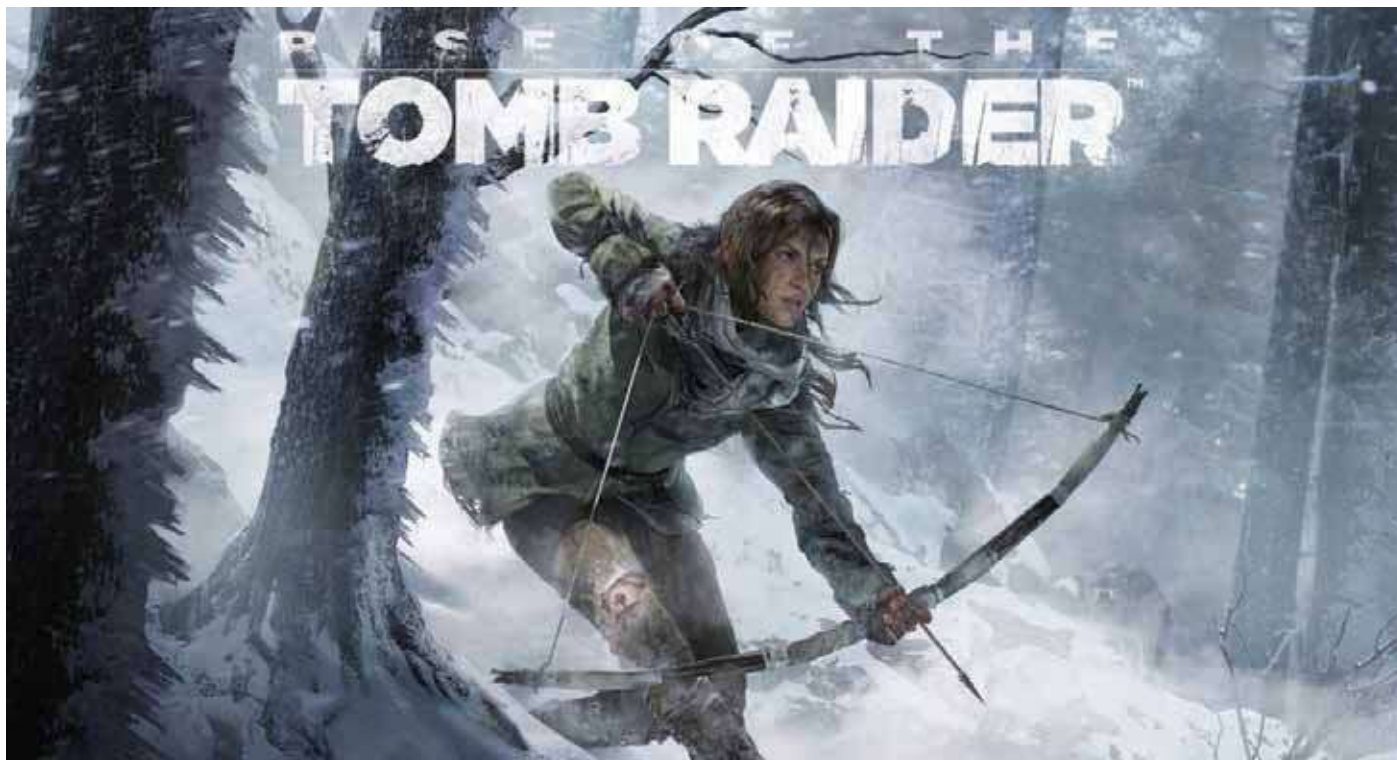
EA REVEALS

Ninety percent of people that were watching the EA press conference had only one thing in mind: Star Wars. Sure, there are some that were interested in Mirror's Edge Catalyst, but the main attraction was Star Wars. For fans of these two titles, they were treated to gameplay trailers.

For Battlefront, EA showcased the Fighter Squadron game mode, which is a 20 vs 20 aerial dogfight. This mode will put players in the cockpits of X-Wings, A-Wings, TIE Fighters and TIE Interceptors as they duel with 10 AI controlled ships, or against each other with 10 players per side. Powerups located on the field will allow players to take control of the Millennium Falcon or Slave I.

Mirror's Edge Catalyst's gameplay trailer showed off more parkour and combat, which seemed to flow better now. Art direction in the game remains one of the game's strongest point as Mirror's Edge 2 showed great visuals as well.

Apart from those two games, other titles that were shown off include a trailer for the latest "Need For Speed", the latest expansion to Star Wars The Old Republic titled "Knights of the Fallen Empire", a new Sims 4 Expansion called "Get Together" and, of course, more sports games.



SQUARE ENIX REVEALS

It seems that Square Enix would like to keep their cards closer to the chest until the Tokyo Games Show. That was the explanation given as to why there wasn't really anything new being revealed on Final Fantasy 15 during Gamescom. The trailer released during the event didn't show off any gameplay, focusing instead on the story.

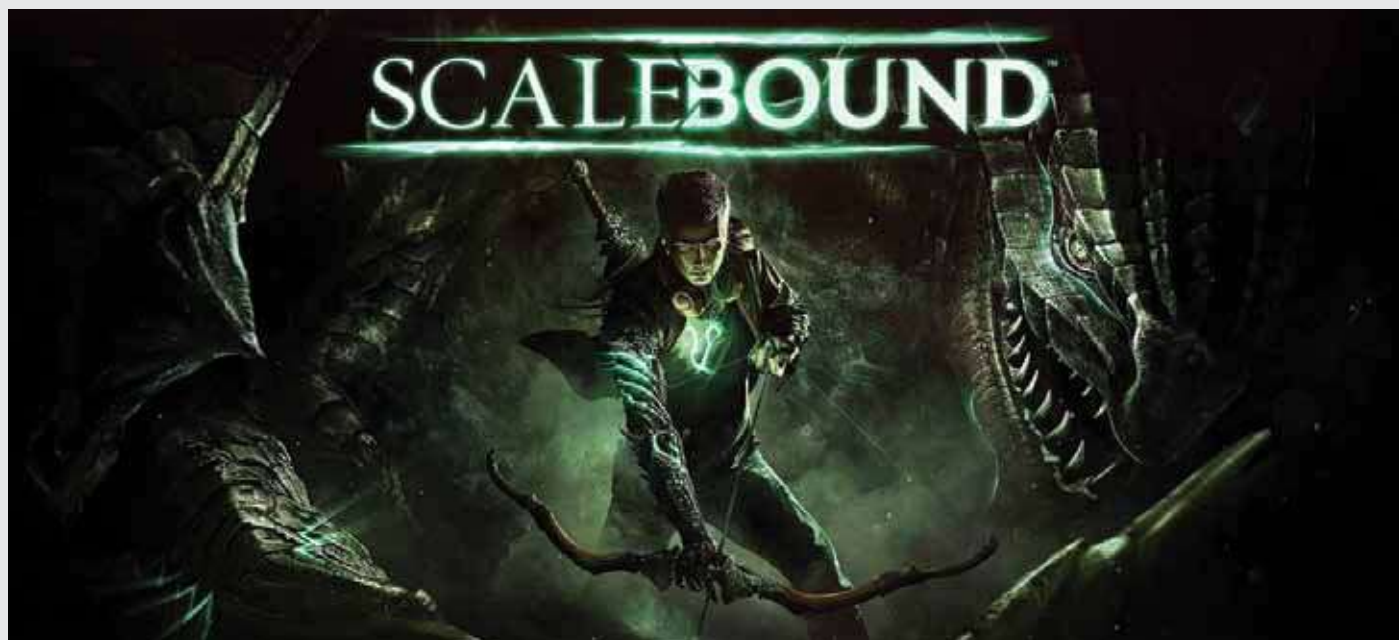
That said, Rise of the Tomb Raider was present at Gamescom and there was a bit more substance in that reveal than FF15 had. From what the footage showed though, it seems that stealth will be an important core to the next entry in the Tomb Raider series.



BLIZZARD REVEALS

Legion. That pretty much sums up Blizzard's press conference for Gamescom. Yes, Blizzard did talk about the new Hearthstone expansion, the Grand Tournament, and yes, they also talked about the new characters that will be coming to Heroes of the Storm; but really, we were all waiting for the announcement of the next World of Warcraft expansion.

Legion is the next WoW expansion and it will be focusing on, as the name gives away, the Burning Legion. In this expansion, the level cap is raised to 110, a new continent called the Broken Isles will be the centre of this conflict, and a new hero class will be introduced, the Demon Hunter. Old characters that will be making a return include Gul'dan, Illidan Stormrage and Maiev Shadowsong.



OTHER NOTABLE REVEALS

In a list of things that we'd never expect to be announced at Gamescom, Mafia III ranks somewhere at the top. The third instalment of the open world Italian Mafia simulator looks to be one of the most promising titles in Gamescom, and from what we've seen and read so far, we're properly hyped for this.

Are you a fan of 4X games? If you are, then Paradox Interactive has revealed the existence of Stellaris. From the makers of games set in the medieval times (Crusader Kings 2 and Europa Universalis), Paradox is taking the jump into the future as Stellaris will be set in the final frontier: Space. Being a Paradox game, expect Stellaris to be hard to get into, but when you do, it'll be one of the most rewarding games of its genre. **PC**





A Shower Of Bullets

Cave games to debut on Steam this winter

If you're a fan of the shoot-em-up sub-genre called "bullet hell", chances are good that you've heard of the company called Cave before.

Makers of some of the most iconic (and sadistic) games of its type, Cave's catalogue includes titles such as the ESP series, the DonPachi series, Deathsmiles and Guwange. Some of Cave's titles are available on Xbox Live currently, but that will change come winter of this year, as Degica will be assisting Cave with porting their games to the PC platform via Steam.

While no information has been revealed as to what titles will be made available on Steam, one thing that can be certain is that the games that will be coming to Steam will appeal to the most masochistic of players. **PC**



A Taste Of Vive

HTC Vive VR Headset launching "limited" numbers this year

During the beginning of the year, HTC announced that they will be developing the re-Vive VR Headset in partnership with Valve. Fast forward to the present, the Vive is about to go commercial, but in limited quantities.

According to a press release, Valve states that "later this year, HTC will offer the first commercial Vive units via a limited quantity of community and developer systems, with larger quantities shipping in calendar Q1 2016."

Essentially, buying a brand new Vive at your favourite tech store seems to be a highly unlikely scenario. On the plus side, we could be hearing feedback from experts about the Vive headset very soon, which will be highly useful to people who are contemplating getting a Vive headset. **PC**





Galaxy Bound

Disney Infinity 3.0 introduced to Malaysia

In Disney Infinity 2.0, Disney introduced the Marvel universe. For 3.0, Disney intends to ferry us to a galaxy far, far away as the company introduces the Star Wars universe in the third update to the series.

This latest update in Disney's best-selling "hybrid toy/video game" brings with it new Play Sets, three of which takes place in the Star Wars universe. Apart from Star Wars, other Play Sets that were introduced to Disney Infinity 3.0 include an Inside Out Play Set based on the latest Pixar film of the same name, and a new Marvel Play Set which features the Hulkbuster Iron Man and Ultron.

Apart from the new characters, Disney Infinity 3.0's Toy Box mode has been enhanced to make navigating much easier for players. It will also feature two new adventure games, the first being Toy Box Speedway, which is a Mario Kart-ish racing minigame; and Toy Box Takeover, a co-op mode where players are tasked with saving the Toy Box from various bad guys. **PC**



Jason Moffitt, Producer of Disney Infinity 3.0, introduces Star Wars characters who join the Disney Infinity 3.0 universe

Gaming Tube

Google brings YouTube Gaming online

It was only a matter of time before Google launches a new version of YouTube that caters to gamers. Well, it just so happens that the time happens to be now, as the company has launched YouTube Gaming.

This spinoff service, as the name implies, is focused solely on gaming. YouTube Gaming allows users to livestream their gaming sessions and upload their sessions online, making this service a direct challenge to the reigning king of video games broadcast, Twitch.

While it is uncertain as to whether or not the service would be adopted by those who have gotten used to the Twitch environment, it would be interesting to see how both services will evolve over time. After all, competition is always something welcomed by consumers. **PC**



You Tube GAMING



Same Old Shtick

Hyperdevotion Noire: Goddess Black Heart

by matthew yap

Hyperdimension Neptunia, is a series that's popular for its amusing characters and its ability to break the forth wall. The characters in the series make it memorable for many, and each of the Goddesses has their own group of fans. So when Compile Heart decided that the other CPUs needed spin-offs, the first was Hyperdevotion Noire: Goddess Black Heart.

I WANNA BE THE HEROINE!

In this spin-off, Neptune gets her lazy butt kicked off the protagonist throne and is replaced by Noire, Lastation's CPU, the Goddess Black Heart. At the start, she takes on the other CPUs in a one-vs-three fight and wins, coming out of the fight smelling like roses. But not long after, a certain incident happens and it strips all powers from the Goddesses.

IRRELEVANT ROLE

"You" appear after that and are named Noire's secretary, though that has no gameplay impact, just a mechanic please Noire fan-boys. The game is at its core a standard grid-based tactical RPG, rather than the turn-based RPG that the main

Hyperdimension Neptunia series is known for. Like any T-RPG, you start out with a small army that eventually grows bigger. However, unlike many games in the genre, your characters aren't actually locked into different class types, but are more individually unique.

NOTHING NEW

This game is turn-based, with missions divided into a player and enemy phase.

During your phase, you select characters to move, attack, use skills or items, and more. It's practically easy mode, however, since you get to freely choose which character moves first. Familiar elements apply, such as hitting from the side or back to gain higher chance-to-hit or damage. Terrain effects, like height differences determine if a character can attack or move, or traps activating when a character walks over it.





◀ STANDARD RPG

The town of Lastation is your base, where you can purchase supplies and weapons, or forge them using materials gained from monster drops. Levelling up is fixed here, so you don't get to pick how stats are distributed or what skills are learnt; in other words, very typical JRPG. Like all games in this series, missions can be freely chosen, so you can pick between the ones that advance the story or a simulation match to grind for levels and materials. Once a mission is picked, you get a pre-mission phase where you deploy and equip character, as well as set the leader for that particular mission. I tend to pick Vert, whose +15% to Strength and Intelligence though might not be all that great earlier on in the game, but percentage base increments are always better later on. Of course, depending on what you fight against in a mission, it might be a good idea to adjust accordingly.

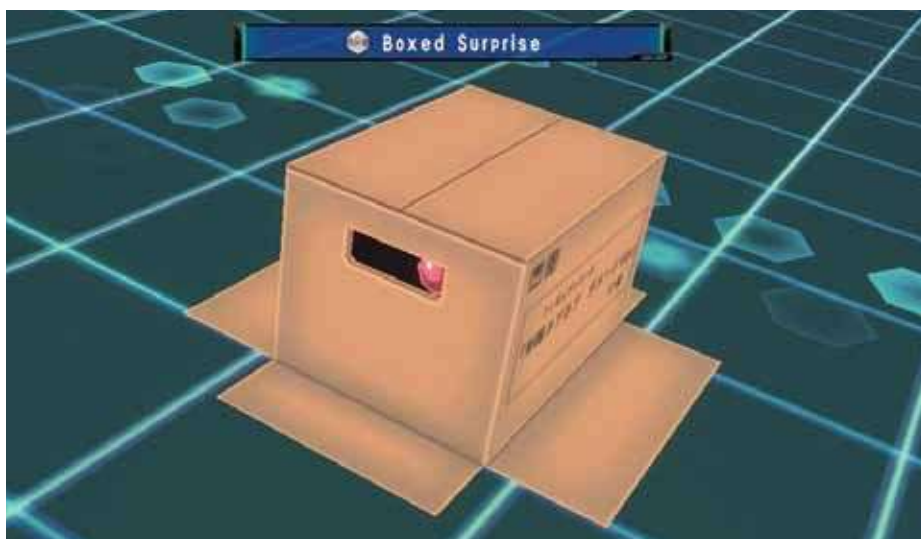
FRIENDLY GREETINGS

When a character uses a skill with other characters adjacent to them, it initiates a "Lily Boosting", increasing damage if it's an attack skill, while lowering the SP cost and adding "Lily Points". Lily Points have a few uses, like allowing the Goddesses to transform into their HDD form, making the game an overall cakewalk. It's also the only way for you to unleash a character's ultimate attack. Finally, it can be used to deploy reserve characters to replace another on the field, or one that has been KO'ed.

EASY MODE

Hyperdevotion Noire doesn't present much of a challenge to those who are used to tactical RPGs, which can be disappointing for some. Then again, the series has never been interested in making it difficult for gamers, but more of presenting the players

with a whacky story that makes you chuckle. If you're looking for something simple or are already a fan of the series, you'll want to pick up this game. For those who prefer something more in-depth, then this isn't going to be your cup of tea. **PC**



PUBLISHER:

Idea Factory International

DEVELOPER: Compile Heart, Sting

PLATFORM: PS Vita

RELEASE DATE: 24 February 2015

GENRE: Tactical RPG

PLAYER(S): Single-Player

CHOSEN PLATFORM:

Playstation Vita



matthew yap

6/10
OKAY

A NEW BUT FAMILIAR
FORMAT ON A POPULAR
SERIES, JUST SOMETHING
TO PASS THE TIME.



Visual Stunner

Final Fantasy X/X-2 HD Remaster

by abby li

Final Fantasy X/X-2 HD Remaster was actually already released for PS3 much earlier, and I didn't really think there would be that much of a difference in the PS4 version. However, the remastering of both these versions is even more polished and would make your old experience in Spira feel brand new.

VISUAL FEST

If you can remember how the original version was like, and if you have seen the HD remastering done on the PS3 version, you would notice that planes are still a little sharp and blocky; but in PS4, all of these are gone and edges have all been rounded up. Even colours are more vibrant, and the





◀ little details you couldn't make out in the older version have made the characters and environment look different. In fact, you can even see Yuna being nervous with her twitching fingers, and flowing hair have become, well, more flowy.

SAME OL'STUFF

When it comes to gameplay, nothing has changed. This is what I dislike most in game remasters, especially from Final Fantasy series. There is nothing new; not even a bonus gameplay or maybe some "director's cut" parts that was removed from the original game. This is just Square Enix being lazy and resurrecting these old cash cows to get more dough without having to make too much effort. I was hoping they would have at least made those annoyingly long draggy cutscenes skippable but maybe even that was too much effort for them.

PLEASE BRING BACK ATB

Yes, one of the reasons myself and some others would purposely buy the PS4 remaster of these games is to enjoy the best way Final Fantasy games were meant to be enjoyed – the classic ATB battle style. I honestly have to say I absolutely hate the new style of combat, and still wish Square Enix didn't remove the ATB combat system, last seen in FFX/X-2. The ATB system is turned-based and actually allows you to be more tactical instead of the newer TL;DR style of combat.

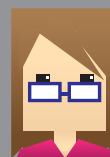
LOVE IT OR HATE IT

If you enjoyed either one of these versions of Final Fantasy, then you would totally revel in the stunningly beautiful HD remastered graphics that really makes the characters feel more alive. However, if you are in it expecting something new, then you would be sorely disappointed. **PC**



DEVELOPER: Square Enix
PUBLISHER: Square Enix
PLATFORM: PS4, PS3, PS Vita
RELEASE DATE: May 2015
GENRE: JRPG
PLAYER(S): Single Player

CHOSEN PLATFORM: PlayStation 4



abby li

5 /10
MEH..

BEAUTIFUL VISUALS TO
ACCOMPANY SORELY-
MISSED COMBAT SYSTEM.



Walk It Off

Everybody's Gone To The Rapture

by rul mk

The term "Walking Simulator" has never existed as a video game genre, that is, until games like *Dear Esther* and *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter* came to be, introducing gamers to a whole new experience of storytelling and exploration. *Everybody's Gone To The Rapture* (let's just call it *Rapture*..) is a PS4 exclusive developed by The Chinese Room and is another take on the fad. With no combat or quick timed events hindering players in their exploration, players are introduced to a very calming and mysterious post-apocalypse.

WHAT THE RUDDY 'ELL HAPPENED?

In *Rapture*, players begin their journey in a fictional village in Shropshire, England, only to find out that everyone has mysteriously disappeared and a radio message from a person named Kate declaring that she's the only person left. With curiosity being your drive, you'll set out to explore the village; seeking the answers to this strange phenomenon that caused the disappearance of its inhabitants, and hopefully find the sole survivor. Ironically, little is known of who your character is or what specific role you play in the game aside from finding out what

happened to the people. The more mysteries the better, I suppose.

HEY, LISTEN!

Aside from opening a lot of doors and gates, interactivity in *Rapture* is pretty limited. You'll eventually find items such as radios that broadcast parts of Kate's journal as she investigates the strange phenomenon, and also phones that will recall villager conversations. You'll also get to interact with wisps that wander around the village. When encountered, these wisps will often lead you

to places of interest, and visually project past events in a ghostly light show that involve the villagers. Most of *Rapture's* story is told in this way, thus encouraging players to explore thoroughly and have a sharp eye for details and clues. Not saying that opening doors and gates are tedious either, instead, it brings great delight to discover that a certain section of the village is explorable.

TAKE YOUR TIME

Aside from some instances where the wisps prompts you to follow it to places of interest, ►





◀ there's no sense of urgency in Rapture. You're free to roam as much as you'd like and may find interesting details that are relevant to the villagers or to the phenomenon itself. The locations in this game are humongous in size. Sure, it's not as large as GTA V's Los Santos, but enough to give you a grand sense of scale when travelling on foot. Aside from starting or continuing your game, moving around the countryside is seamless without a loading screen in sight. Bear in mind, Rapture takes the Walking Simulator genre almost literally because there's no sprint function. Yup, you'll be walking all the way. Thankfully, it's only a village rather than a full-blown metropolis.

SIGHTS AND SOUND

Being the fussy person I am, I was impressed with how every part of Shropshire is almost uniquely rendered without repeated props lazily thrown in to fill up the world. Hence, immersion in Rapture felt nearly authentic

in terms of exploring a quaint village in England without the cost of actually travelling there. The visuals are powered by Cryengine 3, and are breathtakingly astonishing. Every now and then, I find myself constantly looking for a nice spot just to capture screenshots. The virtual photographer in me is happy.


The music, composed by Jessica Curry, captures moments perfectly with its wonderful scores. From light and ambient melodies as you casually stroll across the village, and to intense choir vocals when experiencing key story events. The soundtrack does very well to deliver a sense of serenity, empathy and awe.

ONE TIME JOURNEY

While scattered in bits and pieces, the story did pique my interest to the very end, and the exploration of the beautiful English countryside felt very immersive every step of the way. Although, throughout

the story's unravelling, most of the time it's as if I was merely an observer rather than being directly related to the game's setting. Replayability in Rapture is almost unnecessary, unless you've missed some non-key story events. Now if VR support is added to this game, I definitely wouldn't mind giving it another go. **PC**





EVERYBODY'S GONE
TO THE RAPTURE


PUBLISHER:
Sony Computer Entertainment

DEVELOPER: The Chinese Room

PLATFORM: PlayStation 4

GENRE:
Adventure, Walking Simulator

PLAYER(S): Single Player



rul mk

7 /10
GOOD

A GAME OF MINIMUM
INTERACTIVITY WITH
BEAUTIFUL SCENERY, AN
AMAZING SOUNDTRACK, AND
A WHOLE LOT OF WALKING.



A Grand Gathering

Fate / Grand Order

by sia zhen ning

The Fate franchise getting a Japanese mobile game (or mobage) is a no-brainer. Kinoko Nasu's Fate series has been a license to explicitly print money since it was first released as a visual novel back in the year 2004. Now with both Fate / Zero and Unlimited Blade Works being adapted into an anime by ufotable, what better way to keep printing more money by releasing a mobage set in the expansive Fate universe. Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Fate / Grand Order.

HISTORY RUN

For a mobage, Fate / Grand Order has a very extensive story line to follow, all done in a visual novel style of which the series was birthed from. The story follows the Chaldea Security Organisation's attempt to avert human extinction by, somehow, tracking the six Holy Grail wars that occurred in the past. In the storyline, you'll meet with characters such as the obviously evil professor, the obvious Tohsaka Rin expy, the team pet which is obviously a disguise for an all-powerful mage, and your partner-in-crime, the Shielder-class demi-servant (half human, half servant) by the name of Mashu.

THE THRONE OF HEROES

As the game is part of the Fate franchise, you can expect a boatload of characters in Grand Order. Many of the characters from the other Fate series, up to Fate / Extra CCC, are included in Grand Order such as Arthuria Pendragon, Elizabeth Bathory, Lu Bu etc. New servants were also introduced to the game with the main seven being Atila the Hun, Arjuna, Scathach, Ushiwakamaru,

Mephistopheles, Dr Jekyll and Darius III. Other characters such as Mozart and Blackbeard were also made into servants, although they are much easier to acquire than the seven stated above.

THE DANCE OF HEROES

Gameplay-wise, Fate / Grand Order is a pretty standard mobage by any standards. If you've played other games of the same genre such





◀ as Gran Blue Fantasy, you can pretty much guess how the mechanics work. The actual game involves your party of three taking turns to attack the enemy party by using a combination of three movement cards. When you fill up a gauge just below your character's HP bar, you'll be able to unleash their respective Noble Phantasm, which can either be a damaging move, a buff, or both. Advantages and weaknesses work much like a Pokemon where one class is weaker to one while stronger against the other.

UNLIMITED MAINTENANCE WORKS

I'll be honest, the simple gameplay in Grand Order is really fun. It's actually kind of addicting. Unfortunately, the game as a whole is plagued with dumb design decisions and instability. For starters, AP (Action Point) regeneration in the game is set at 10 minutes for 1 AP. Some

quests require 20 AP to do, so if you have no APs left, you're going to have to wait 200 minutes (3 hours and 20 minutes) just to clear that quest. Adding on to that, the game tends to crash frequently. However, my biggest problem with the game is the servers. On the first week of launch, the servers crashed so frequently that the game was placed on a 30+ hour maintenance just to fix it up. Even after that, connections to the server seem to be really wonky as you can just drop out of the game without so much as a warning.

FANS ONLY

Would I recommend Fate / Grand Order to people who aren't fans of the Fate series? No, I wouldn't. There are better mobages out there that are much more stable than Grand Order even if you leave the issues aside, the game

is aimed directly at Fate fans, so if you're not one, this game isn't going to convert you into one, which means you really have no reason to play this. **PC**



DEVELOPER: DELiGHT WORKS Inc.
PUBLISHER: Aniplex Inc.
PLATFORM: iOS, Android
RELEASE DATE: 29 July 2015 (Android)
GENRE: Japanese Mobile Game (Mobage)
PLAYER(S): Single Player



sia zhen ning

5 /10
MEH..

A FLAWED FANSERVICE
GAME FOR FANS OF
FATE/STAY NIGHT

Building Blocks

Minecraft: PlayStation 4 Edition

by abby li

Minecraft. Although its graphics are not top notch (that is an understatement) and the gameplay doesn't seem to make much sense to many out there, it has an unholy number of cult followings. Just open YouTube and type Minecraft; that will tell you the demand garnered by this blocky pixelated game. Anyway, since it is so popular, it was made on almost every platform imaginable; whether on PC, mobile, handheld and on both PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4. Let's take a look at what the PS4 Edition offers.

A NEVERENDING SANDBOX

Just like all the rest of its editions, Minecraft is more than just digging, mining and building huts. There is a whole world of endless possibilities to explore and create; it all boils down to your imagination. You can start off small, and slowly you will notice your projects become bigger and more complex as you mine for precious materials, which in turn creates more possibilities.

HELP IS AT HAND

So what is the difference between this edition compared with Minecraft of PS3, or even the one on PC? For one, the

graphics is sharper on the PS4 edition and somehow the performance seems better and faster. On top of that, there is an in-depth tutorial system with tooltips popping up to give you information on materials and what you can do with them. In fact, the tutorial is so well written that it eases you into all the things you can do in-game, such as enchanting weapons and making potions.

BIGGER IS BETTER

Compared to its previous console iterations, Minecraft on PS4 has a larger map, almost 37 times the size of the world on PS3 and Xbox 360. Also in the previous versions, the ocean is the end of the world and you can't go beyond that; however in this edition, you can go beyond that, exploring new lands and digging through random caves for treasure.

SHARING IS CARING

Playing Minecraft alone can be a tad boring after a while, so you would want to think about playing with friends online. While you need to setup servers when playing on PC – which can be a pain in the butt, on the PS4 is super easy as you can invite seven more friends to play with you using PlayStation Network. So whether you are

playing with friends near or far, or whether exploring and building alone, Minecraft for PS4 offers hours of gameplay despite it not having state-of-art graphics. **PC**



DEVELOPER: Mojang
PUBLISHER: Sony Computer Entertainment
RELEASED: September, 2014
GENRE: Sandbox, Survival
PLAYER(S): Single player, Multiplayer



abby li

6 /10
OKAY

**ONLY IF YOU ENJOY
 LOOKING AT BLOCKS
 IN THE SANDBOX**





Post-Apocalyptic Takeout

Fallout Shelter

by rul mk

Anounced and simultaneously released during Bethesda's E3 presentation in July, the free-to-play mobile game Fallout Shelter was a big surprise to Fallout fans. Riding on Fallout 4's hype, Shelter became a sensation overnight in the Apple's App Store charts. A month later, anticipating Android users rejoiced when the game was finally released for the platform. As expected, the game also became a hit and the fan base increased in size. So how does it feel to be a boss in the post apocalyptic wasteland?

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

You're the Vault Overseer whose duty is to ensure the survivability, productivity and happiness of your Vault and its dwellers. You'll even get the chance to name.. well, number.. your vault, as well as its inhabitants. As Overseer, you're tasked to build facilities such as living quarters, diners, power generators, water treatment, and so on. Dwellers are then required to be assigned to these facilities to ensure productivity for the Vault's survivability. You may opt to rush productivity of a facility to quickly gain resources and caps, but be warned as this might risk breakdowns or cause monster infestation.

More advanced facilities will be made available once you've gathered more dwellers. Defence and weapon development

are introduced later, and is crucial for fending off threats such as raiders, Radroaches, and Deathclaws. DEATHCLAWS.

FEEL SPECIAL

Vault dwellers are a fun bunch. Each dweller have a set of attributes called SPECIAL, which is an acronym of Strength, Perception, Endurance, Charisma, Intelligence, Agility and Luck. Certain attributes are favourable for certain facilities in your vault, and facility designated dwellers will have the chance to level up their SPECIAL as you progress.

Aside from being in the Vault for their entire lifetime, you can send out dwellers to scavenge the wasteland to find caps, items and equipment. Although you won't see them in action, you can keep track of their progress in a log-style interface. Yes, they have a good chance of dying if left out too long.

You can repopulate the vault by either picking up stragglers, obtaining a special dweller from Lunchbox rewards or good ol' reproduction between two dwellers. The latter allowing improved SPECIAL attributes to be genetically handed down to their children. Procreation, eff yeah!

DANGEROUSLY ADORABLE

Fallout Shelter looks great on mobile. Sure, it's not Unreal level of high-end graphics, but it holds well on it's own with Fallout's familiar retro-futuristic art style, setting and zany dweller character design. Along with

the cosmetics are the hilarious dialogue, and writing expected from a Fallout game. Even with its lighter take on the world in Shelter, the developers did a great job of packaging the series' feel into a mobile format. It's as close as we can get to another Theme Hospital game, and definitely something that will keep you occupied for months to come. **PC**



PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks
DEVELOPER: Bethesda Softworks
PLATFORM: Android, iOS
GENRE: Vault Management Simulator
PLAYER(S): Single Player



rul mk

7 /10
GOOD

**AN ADDICTIVE, AND BITE-SIZED
FALLOUT EXPERIENCE**

Post Hibernation

P1 returning to the fray with a new fortitude.

by sia zhen ning



P1 has been silent for a rather long while. Now though, they're coming back into the market with new promises and new business. PC.com takes some time to talk with Lai Shu Wei, the Chief Marketing Officer for P1.

PC.com : Can you tell us what's happening to P1 right now?

P1: P1 is in a very exciting time since the announcement of us now being part of the TM Group of companies. So, with this new involvement, the focus for us now is to move into the mobility play and focus on the LTE capabilities of 4G. TM has been successful in connecting homes through fibre, and with the current internet experience customers have today, customers are expecting the same experience continuity when they leave the fixed environment. P1 focusing on the new LTE landscape is at an appropriate time as we are the perfect link in terms of bringing the full convergence experience

to the customer. So for us, this whole investment modelling between TM, GreenPacket and of course SK Telecom – is quite unique simply because we have TM, which is an established organisation with good governance processes, insights and has a very strong customer base. That has been embraced by us so that we can cross-leverage each other's capabilities. We also have SK Telecom, being one of the global leaders when it comes to LTE technology, as a crucial partner when it comes to helping us in sizing up our network and how we are designing the network experience. Additionally, I think P1 by itself has always been known to have the characteristics of a Silicone Valley type of company that has a strong appetite to try new things. When you add it all up, the result is quite unique because you get a great combination of good governance, financial backing, and technology insights, and at the same time able to retain the existing working style, culture and people.

PC.com: How has the new partnership with TM and SK Telecom changed P1?

P1: We now have the capability to leverage from the best of the best. A way we often describe ourselves is, imagine in a family, there is always this child of yours who is a little bit more special. Special as in he has potential for greatness, but yet he's still a part of the same family. So I think the agility, the entrepreneurship, the creativity and innovation is highly engrained, but at the same time, we have a very strong influence in terms of what are the correct approaches, processes, governance and resources coming from TM. So when you add the best of both, you kind of have the best of both. And again, as I mentioned, when it comes to network capabilities, SKT is the world's best in this game, so it's nicely coming together. We're very excited and looking forward to entering this sector of the market as we speak.

PC.com : As you know, P1 has been quiet for quite a long time up till today. Can you explain what is going on with P1 during this stretch of silence?

P1: There are a lot of due diligence and things that needed to be done post merger. So we were quiet simply because we were going through the whole process. This year though, we're back with a very strong campaign. Although this new campaign is for the existing WiMax service and not the new business, we're back louder and we're spending more than we've ever did in the past three years. We're investing heavily in terms of our advertising and we've redone our product proposition to be very competitive. We've relooked at our network; and while we're clear we're not building more WiMax networks, but in areas that we are serving, we've continuously improved them to continue the delivery of the service. So if you add everything together, in many ways, this is our comeback story to the market, at least for this interim period until the new business begins.

PC.com: Seeing as P1 is going through this revival of sorts, can you tell us how P1 is different now than it was before?

P1: I think one of the key things we did is, in areas that we are selling, we ensure that our networks are good. We have improved in terms of our network coverage and the quality of the network experience. I don't think we want to go out there and just sell to everybody with an inferior experience. We are very clear in terms of where we are heading and who we are targeting. So while you can hear the campaigns everywhere, when we go



on ground into acquisition, we are very focused in terms of who we want to sell to. This is all part and parcel of ensuring that the experience is there. The great thing is, even in investments, you don't see us in mainstream media, but instead we're investing more than what we used to spend on other than mainstream media, especially the digital space. We're investing in the digital space not because it is a sexy word, but because in that space, we have a greater ability to target our customers. So we are very specific in terms of who we want to reach and where we want to reach, so that we can ensure the service experience that we are providing are well-received.

PC.com: So you're basically leveraging social media?

P1: Social, digital and online media. It's a combination. Also, we're profiling sites where customers are going to. For us, the main target here is to talk to customers that are moving away or moving into their first broadband experience away from their small screen experience. So we're trying to propagate them to move into this and try us out, so much so that we even give them no upfront payment. We also tell them that the first 30 days are a trial period, and we don't charge you. In order for us to do this, we need to be very confident in our own product, otherwise we can't come out with such a proposition as it is quite aggressive.

PC.com: How is this campaign going to increase P1's market share in the industry? How is this going to change the mindset of the users about P1's capability and reliability?

P1: We've been quiet for some time, so people don't really know what we're up to especially post-merger. So this campaign is, in many ways, our comeback story by looking at our customers very differently. I've shared with you that it's not just about selling, it's also about the service experience, it's also about segments, making sure that wherever we are able to deliver is where we will sell to our customers. It is also opening a very different paradigm whereby if we're confident in the experience, then the customer will be confident of us. Hence, that is why you'll see things like we are not taking upfront payments from you, and we waive off the first month fee for you. We're doing things like that because we're going in a very different philosophical approach where, if we're able to deliver what we want, and the customers are able to experience what we designed the system to do, then there

should be a mutual relationship between a customer and a provider. This is a little bit different from how traditional brands are used to doing, by shouting their fixed propositions to everyone. It may be relevant to some, it may be irrelevant to others. So I think this is one of the significant changes in terms of our approach, where we choose how we communicate, whenever we are talking to our customers. We've invested a huge amount of money in the digital space for just one reason, it's all about targeting, and it is all about our ability to reach and communicate well to those customers.

PC.com: As the CMO of P1, what are your long and short term goals to change the broadband market in Malaysia?

P1: I think there are a lot of opportunities in terms of the customer experience. I always tell people that I think there is enough technology out there. What's really lacking, or the area of opportunity, is in the customer experience and the customer journey. A lot of my emphasis are created around how we will have a very different philosophical approach: placing customers ahead of us. So segmentation, understanding customers, insights, giving relevant propositions, making sure customers gain benefit from what they're getting from us are the areas I focus on. So this is a little bit different from the conventional approach whereby everyone yells about technology. We're changing into the "what do you think you need" approach, and we'll try to provide that experience to you, and we can do it given the kind of technology we have. The approach is quite interesting, it's from a very "product oriented" to a highly consumer-driven kind of approach. The biggest challenge for me is to really drive the change, and I think it's not impossible because it is not new to the world, even though it is somewhat new in the telco industry, but certainly it is not a new approach in other industries. So the challenge is really about driving the mindset of the telco industry, or in this case P1, to move closer to a consumer-led industry.

PC.com: You've mentioned that you're looking to increase the reliability and capacity of P1. How are these going to be implemented? Is it going to be rolled out in phases, or is it going to be implemented all in one go?

P1: Today we have one business which is the WiMax business. In the WiMax business, what we did was in areas where we were weak, we enhanced them. Now that we have enhanced the service, we kicked off the campaign. That is business

as usual. The new business is something that we're working on in parallel, that is not commercialised yet, which is the mobile business in LTE. So shortly when we do launch the business, you'll see that there will be a change in emphasis from us being a WiMax provider to an LTE player. Investments are done in two ways. One is, for our existing business, we are improving on our delivery capabilities and quality in existing sites. We are not expanding our footprint, but focusing more on quality. For the new business, we are building a nationwide LTE blueprint, which opens up a whole new different paradigm and market to compete in. So there are two views to this.

PC.com: As you mentioned that you want to expand your LTE blueprint, how do you intend to do that? According to other telcos, acquiring new sites can be very difficult as most of them have been occupied.

P1: There are a couple of ways to do this. Obviously, we are building new sites, but let's not forget that P1 does have an existing infrastructure, and we do have existing sites. Some of these sites are going to be converted into the new LTE framework. So it's a combination of new sites and existing sites that will be used to build the blueprint. Maybe it is a bit premature, but I really believe that we will be one of the fastest to grow in terms of network that you will see among all the incumbent networks.

PC.com: Is there anything you'd like to add to convince readers to switch or to have faith in P1?

P1: We've recently just gone out with a campaign, focusing on our WiMax technology. For us, we have improved and will continue to improve in the areas that we are serving. We wish customers would give us a chance and hence, the reason why we've created the no advance payment, first month waiver program. If it works for them, we are then ready to enter a long term relationship with those customers. If it doesn't work, we'll try again at a later stage. We're calling a spade a spade; we don't really want to do the traditional telco way where we sometimes force certain things to happen. In this case, the message I want to give to potential customers is to give us a try.

PC.com: So I guess honesty is your best policy for this?

P1: I guess it is. As I always say, call a spade a spade. **PC**



Crypto-Ransomware Attacks

The New Form of Kidnapping

by david dunkel, research assistant, threat & marketing, trend micro

The evolution of crime continues to push itself into the cyber world. Physical criminal operations are now learning to walk again as our generation continues to get its feet wet in the digital age. The low risk, high reward incentive involved with cybercrime opens the flood gates for criminal pioneers to evolve their financially motivated heists. In this byline, I will discuss the evolution of ransomware, which is essentially just kidnapping information and extorting money from the vulnerable, technology-dependent citizens of society.

GROWTH OF CRYPTO-RANSOMWARE

As the wealth of information increases so does the dependency on it, which is why hackers are willing to exploit that dependency for their own economic benefit. Crypto-ransomware are malicious malware that encrypt a victim's most important files and hold them hostage until a payment is made to the hacker. Over the past decade we've seen ransomware attack methods advance in techniques and increase in profit. Earlier variants of this malware were more contained, less

costly, and easier to detect. But over time, capabilities have progressed from just locking a victim's computer screen, to encrypting files or the keys that decrypt the files, and so on. Professional hacking organisations are now starting to leverage the nearly invincible malware variants, such as TorrentLocker and CryptoWall (which I will discuss in more detail later), and grow their disjointed criminal activity into coordinated business operations. Case studies have shown actual support teams within these syndicates that are on-call 24/7 and have live chatting forums set up to help guide victims through the payment process. After all, the criminals don't get paid unless the victims cooperate. To add to the professionalism of their mission, web pages are organised to look more legitimate and new features allow users to test out the decryption tools for free to ensure authenticity.

Similar to any other "business," as the tools used in their operations become more advanced, the revenue generated per attack also increases. In the early days of ransomware, it wasn't uncommon to charge the average victim around a 12 dollar fee. But as the malware evolved and

spread globally, the money started to flow in greater quantities. For example, in a Trend Micro study done on TorrentLocker attacks in Australia, the base price for a decryption key was set at just under 600 US dollars. On top of that, the price doubles if it's not paid within 96 hours. You're probably reading that number and thinking that people must be crazy to pay such a large quantity just to regain word documents written three years ago and their John Mayer "Continuum" album from 2006. But when hackers start to go after larger targets, like companies, with more sensitive information, the demand goes up along with the price. Meanwhile, victims are stuck "waiting on the world to change" while professional cyber criminals continue to improve the stealth and effectiveness of their operations.

TORRENTLOCKER- CAPTCHA CODE INFECTION CHAIN

The social engineering behind recent attacks has increased infection rates substantially. TorrentLocker, for instance, has been successful in the ANZ region due to several targeted campaigns that mimicked Australian government/

postal websites in order to lure victims to malicious sites. The infection chain involves a 3 step process:

1. URL Redirection
2. Landing on a Malicious Page
3. CAPTCHA Verification.

In the 1st phase, attackers compromise web servers and inject them with a redirect rule, which constantly changes the URL addresses to avoid detection. Eventually victims are led to a legit landing page that hackers gain control of by filing official addresses, phone numbers, and other information necessary to register a domain under the organisation name that they were posing to be at that time. In doing so, the hackers also further disconnect themselves from the crime. Once on the "government" site, victims are required to complete an easy-to-read CAPTCHA verification test in order to download files with "urgent" information. After entering the code, the TorrentLocker malware is extracted and executes its commands to encrypt files containing extensions like .DOCX, .PDF, and .ZIP. TorrentLocker is gaining popularity with its unique use of CAPTCHA codes and updated blacklists helping to encrypt more files as we've seen this propagate to many European countries too. Security experts at Trend Micro advise their users to be very cautious when receiving any CAPTCHA codes from email links or attachments.


The more ubiquitous variation of crypto-ransomware, labeled "CryptoWall", has been used to exploit unwary businesses in North America. A recent Trend Micro report of CryptoWall covered a campaign in which hackers emailed phony resume documents to businesses, posing as recent college graduates. The strategic timing and design of this socially engineered attack made it difficult for recipients to realise that they were being attacked. Unsuspecting employers were tricked into clicking on what they thought were resumes, but actually turned out to be crypto-ransomware-carrying attachments. Once downloaded, you know how the rest goes. What made this attack interesting, however, were the lengths the malware went to in order to cover its tracks. The most current version "CryptoWall 3.0"

uses AES algorithms to encrypt files and then an RSA to encrypt the key, making it even more difficult for a victim to locate the decryption key. Previously, targets of crypto-ransomware attacks at least had an opportunity to locate only one key and reverse the encryption without paying. But with the decryption key in the hands of the hackers, it's very unlikely and most likely impossible to figure out a method for decrypting.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Along with social engineering, two-tier encryption methods, and evolving malware, bad guys are improving their stealth with each operation. They continue to lurk in the shadows by using .Tor based sites when communicating with their victim and for processing the ransom payment, hundreds or thousands of compromised websites, deleting the shadow copies of every encrypted file, and in some cases with TorrentLocker, using the name "CryptoLocker" in order to confuse users when they are analysing the traffic logs after attacks. Expect to see an increase in mobile ransomware attacks due to the migration of business affairs being conducted through portable devices. The market for underground buying and selling ransomware is huge and we must acknowledge that cyber criminals and nation-state attackers have been adopting the latest variants, like CryptoWall and TorrentLocker, into their operations to carry out wide spread attacks.

"Ransomware is flourishing, as the criminal community appreciates its viability and the ease by which ransomware can be shared," says Tom Kellermann, chief cybersecurity officer at Trend Micro. "The most troubling evolution is the migration to mobile ransomware."

Crypto-ransomware criminals continue to make money off victims with their scare tactics and advanced malware. The fast-moving, well-executed campaigns we've seen in regions like EMEA, ANZ, and North America, particularly, prove that we need to adopt a new approach in defending our information. There's no one solution available to provide complete protection. We need to be able to identify how, where, when, and why a threat operates. It's essential that businesses partner with cyber security companies, like Trend Micro, that have the breadth and knowledge to defend against crypto-ransomware threats. We have a team of over 2,000 threat researchers globally that combine automated big data analytics with human expertise to provide actionable intelligence to security procedures. It takes a combination of both to collect, analyse, and respond to the most urgent threats of today. The price of these attacks will only go up as hackers seize the opportunity for serious financial gain. In order to remediate this problem, we must combine defence technology with human interaction to create a smarter method of protection and keep our information safe from cyber kidnappers. 



4 Steps to Building an Ethical Big Data Practice

by Mary Woo, managing director for South Asia and Korea, Dell Software



As big data becomes further entrenched as a mainstream challenge for organizations both large and small, much of the discussion in the industry continue to revolve around two critical business needs: the need to find more effective ways to manage the explosion of data and data types, as well as the need to better capitalise on the opportunity this proliferation affords in order to make smarter, more insightful decisions.

Amid this justifiable fixation, however, another critical need is often overlooked: the need to build an ethical big data practice, one with proper sensitivity to the privacy concerns of customers.

The ethics of big data is a complicated subject, with much of the complexity stemming from the whims inherent within the concept of privacy itself. What exactly is privacy, and more important, what are an

individual's rights to privacy? The boundaries of privacy differ across cultures, and although it's generally understood that individuals are entitled to some level of privacy, the question of whose responsibility it is to protect that privacy has no single, clearly definable answer.

The issue becomes even murkier when dealing with the nuances of information exchanged between customer and business. In some cases -- namely, with data disclosed to service providers such as doctors and lawyers -- the responsibility has always been on the receiver to protect the privacy of that information. In the case of customer-business relationships that are more transactional, however, such as with a retailer, the protection of private information has historically been seen as the responsibility of the discloser. If people don't want information exposed to a given business, they simply shouldn't provide those details in the course of their dealings with that business.

There was a time when that concept made sense. In the big data era, however, that's no longer the case. Digital information is fluid, its exchange is simple, and its distribution is instantaneous, global, and increasingly essential. Anyone in marketing will attest to the importance of understanding individual consumer identity and patterns, making the need to obtain detailed information about a given customer's background and behaviour critical to the survival of many modern businesses. In other words, businesses aren't just receiving information anymore; they're using information, with a purpose.

The significant transformation inherent in businesses' need to

benefit from personal information means the responsibility to ensure privacy has permanently transitioned from the discloser to the user, and that means organisations must take immediate steps to ensure their burgeoning big data programs are implemented with the ethics of privacy in mind. Though the blueprint for doing so is not nearly complete, here are four steps that can help your business move in the right direction.

1) UNDERSTAND THE RISK FACTORS

Many big data privacy breaches are unintentional and unbeknownst to analysts.

That's why it's critical for everyone involved in a big data initiative to understand the risks associated with the handling of customer information.

Perhaps the biggest risk lies in the merging of purchased data with other pattern data to infer or detect non-disclosed information -- information that may be private in the eyes of the customer. To ensure an ethical practice, target customers solely based on information disclosed within any single transfer of data.

2) EDUCATE USERS

Implementing policies that prevent employees from detecting non-disclosed information is only part of the equation. Employees must still take personal responsibility for what they do with customer data, even data obtained in an ethical manner. It's imperative for a company to educate its staff on what level of targeting is acceptable, and, conversely, where the grey areas are that can potentially be harmful to both the customer and the company's brand.



◀ 3) DESIGN AND USE TOOLS WITH PRIVACY IN MIND


This step applies to both the vendors creating analytical tools and the analysts using them. Today's big data analytics technologies are undeniably powerful and are constantly improving, enabling analysts to reach further than they ever could under the do-not-disclose privacy paradigm. As the saying goes, "with great power comes great responsibility". Without careful consideration by both the designer and user of a given analytical system, overstepping acceptable boundaries can and will happen.

4) LEAD FROM THE TOP DOWN

Employees take their cues from company leaders, and big data is no exception. Top-level executives and business leaders

must make clear to the company's analysts, marketers, and line-of-business managers that it is not acceptable to achieve company objectives at the expense of customer privacy.

The need to derive business value from big data is paramount, but in a world

where technology regularly outpaces social norms, and customers haven't yet had enough time to express their comfort zones over the use of their personal and usage pattern data, the responsibility is on business leaders to demand employees follow an ethical path. 



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